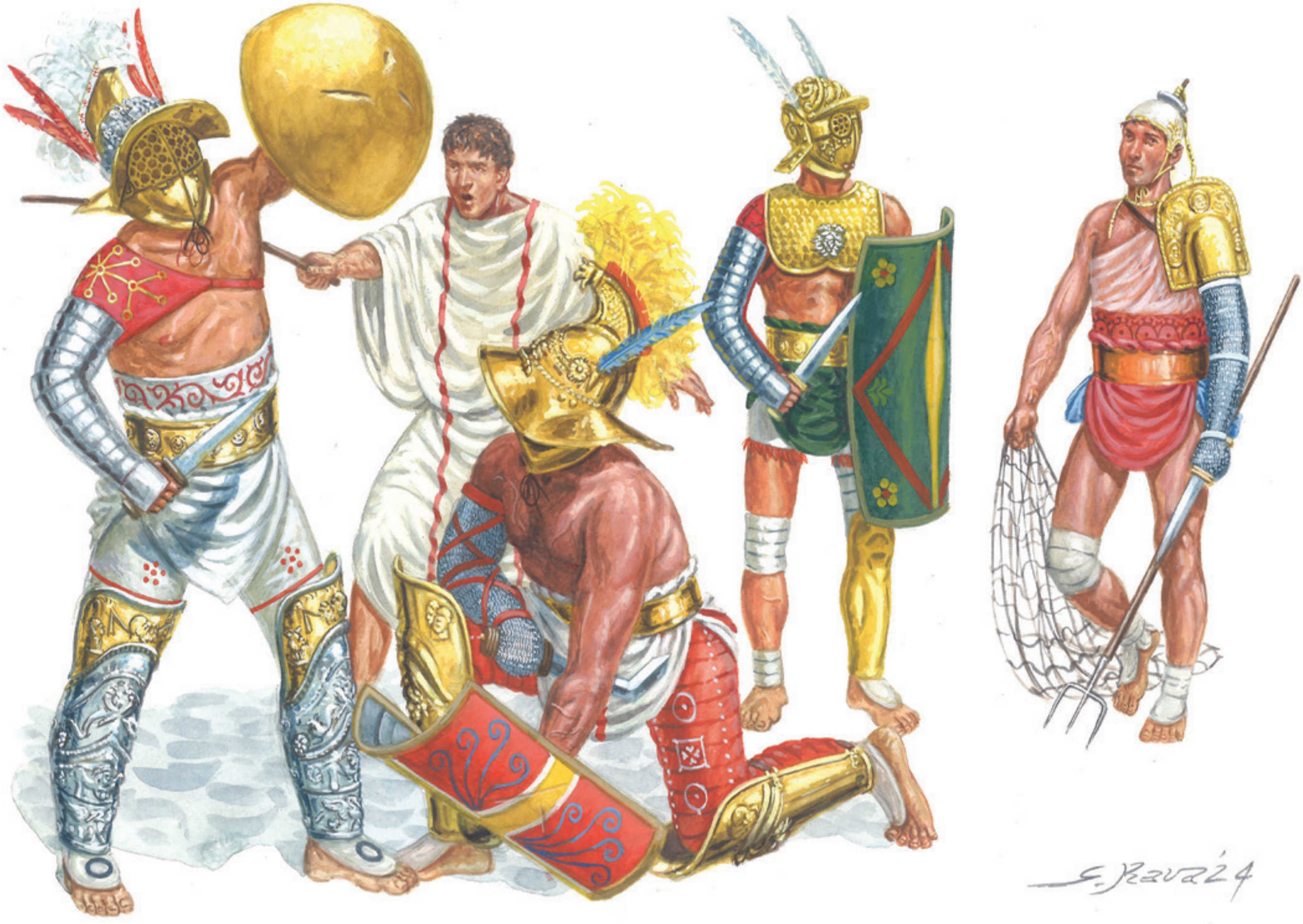
Gladiators 1st–5th centuries AD



FRANÇOIS GILBERT

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Gladiators
1st–5th centuries AD

FRANÇOIS GILBERT

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Series editors Martin Windrow & Nick Reynolds

CONTENTS

EVOLUTION AND DECLINE 4

THE GLADIATORS 7

THE *ARMATURAE* 10

The *Samnis* and the *Gallus* ▪ The *essedarius* ▪ The *mirmillo* ▪ The *provocator* ▪ The *Thraex*
The *hoplomachus* ▪ The *eques* ▪ The *retiarius* ▪ The *sagittarius* ▪ The *andabata/trincus* ▪ The *veles*
The *paegnarius* ▪ The *secutor* ▪ The *scissor/arbelas* ▪ The *dimachaerus* ▪ The *cruppelarius*

GLADIATOR GEAR 35

Clothing ▪ Body armour ▪ Helmets ▪ Shields ▪ Weapons

BIBLIOGRAPHY 62

INDEX 64

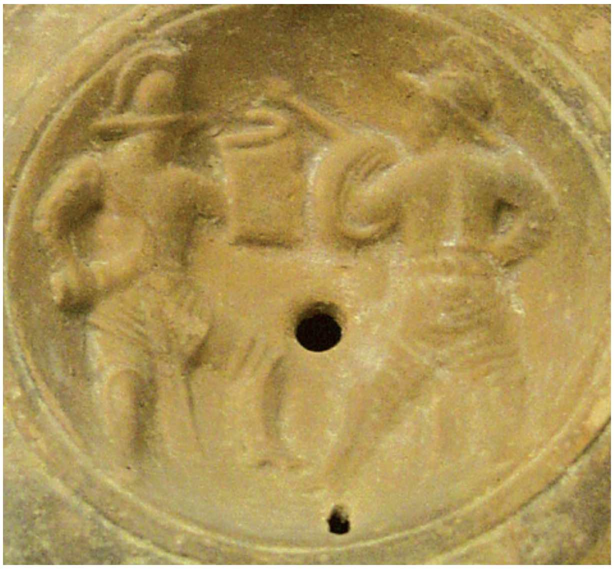
GLADIATORS 1ST–5TH CENTURIES AD

EVOLUTION AND DECLINE

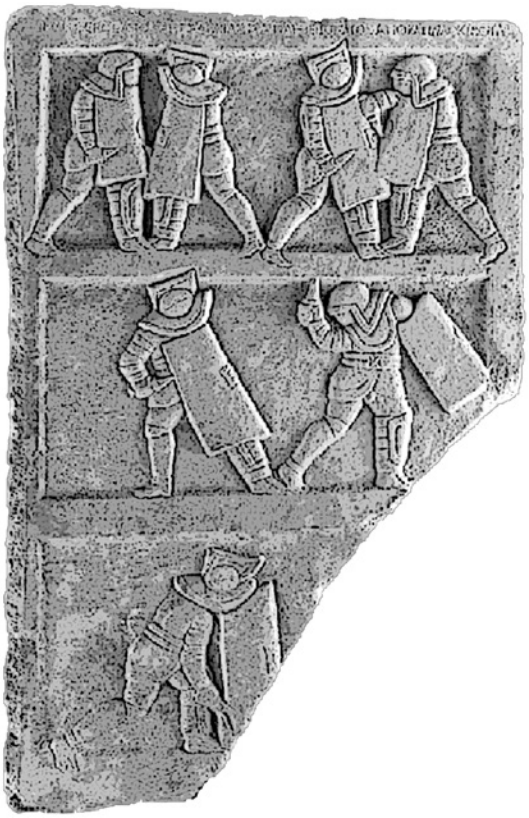
In the present author's earlier study (Gilbert 2022), we saw that, at the start of his reign, the emperor Augustus (r. 31 BC–AD 14) reformed *gladiatura* (gladiatorial combat), which could prove a dangerous instrument in the hands of populist and unscrupulous politicians. From this point on, *gladiatura* would above all serve the imperial cause, and distract the people from their political role lost after the establishment of the Principate. Augustus arrogated to himself a virtual monopoly on major spectacles; they were rare, but magnificent. In his will (*Res Gestae* XXII.1), he states that he organized on average a show (*munus*) every seven years, with a total of 10,000 gladiators, or approximately 1,250 fighters per show. This was ten times the number allowed to other *muneratores*, but this figure is perhaps inflated by including men enlisted for mass combat or *naumachia* (staged naval battles).

Others besides the emperor organized shows (*munera*), such as the priests of the imperial cult, but also the praetors or the quaestors, with the help of the public treasury. There were still private shows, but they were rare, and of limited interest. Private gladiator schools (*ludi*) thus gradually disappeared in Rome, because they could not compete with those of the different emperors. There were four imperial schools: the *ludus Magnus* (the great school), the *ludus matutinus* (the hunters' school), the *ludus gallicus* (Gallic school) and finally the *ludus dacicus* (involving Dacian prisoners captured during the emperor Domitian's (r. AD 81–96) Dacian War (AD 86–88). Emperors also had *ludi* in most provinces. They thus provided their own shows, but they also rented their troupes to those who requested them, thereby earning substantial sums of money. Imperial gladiators of the House of Augustus were called *augusti*, and those of the school of Nero were referred to as *neroniani*.

This detail from a lamp dated to the early 1st century AD and held at the British Museum depicts a spear-armed *hoplomachus* confronting a *Threax*. (S. Lagrange)



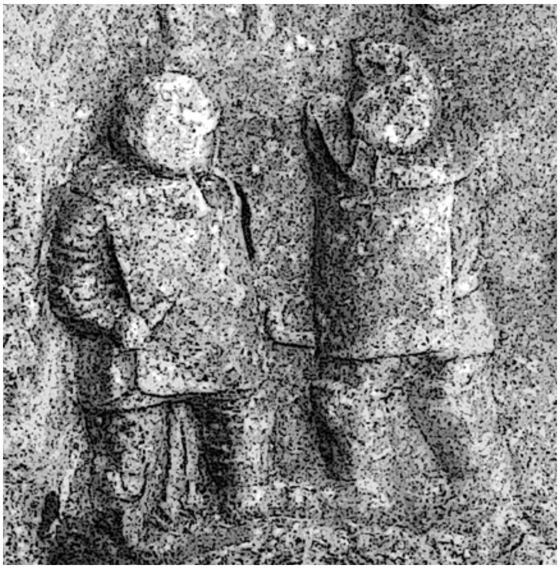
Throughout the history of Rome, investing one's money for the good of the community, by financing festivities or constructing public buildings, was a moral duty for wealthy Romans. This munificence testifies to their greatness. Some people truly ruined themselves, however. At the end of the 2nd century AD, the military, economic and social situation of the Empire darkened. Anxious not to lose too much money in the course of organizing compulsory and expensive shows, the elites no longer sought to run for office. This disaffection threatened the functioning of the State. In AD 177 or 178, the emperor Marcus Aurelius (r. AD 161–80) was therefore forced to reform *gladiatura* to limit the market value of gladiators, and the cost of the amphitheatre shows. This new reform was known by a precious document, called the 'Italica table', because this decree was engraved in a bronze table found in that Spanish city. Marcus Aurelius, however, did not like bloody battles. He could have abolished *gladiatura* on this occasion, but he knew too well the people's attachment to their favourite pleasures. *Gladiatura* was thus able to continue for two more centuries.



Held in a private collection and dated to the late 2nd–early 3rd centuries AD, this depiction shows a contest between a *provocator* and a *mirmillo*. (Author's drawing)

Under the reign of Marcus' son, the emperor Commodus (r. AD 177–92), *gladiatura* began its qualitative decline. Commodus considered himself the greatest gladiator, and 'won' many fake fights, boasting of having defeated 12,000 opponents. Long-established and well-appreciated methods gave way to shows in which brutal force, embodied by the new emperor-gladiator, prefigured what would increasingly become in the 3rd and 4th centuries AD a bloodier and more violent *gladiatura*. After the 'archaic', then 'ethnic', and finally 'technical' periods, explained in the author's previous book, the final phase of *gladiatura* began, which we will call 'deadly'.

Formerly reserved for slaves and convicts, the gladiator schools were opened to free men following the Spartacus revolt and the ensuing Third Servile War (73–71 BC). It was then a question of creating a new motivating *gladiatura*, to attract volunteers, with rewards, ranks, glory, different levels of combat, and above all by causing death only rarely, in very specific situations. *Gladiatura* then became a regulated sport. Romans went to the amphitheatre to admire athletes and their technique. With the excesses of Commodus, however, mentalities changed, and *gladiatura* became more bloody. Whereas gladiators had a 90 per cent chance of being spared at the start of the Principate, they only had a 50 per cent chance at the end. The large mosaic preserved today at the Villa Borghese (Rome, Italy), which is one of the last images of *gladiatura* in the 4th century AD, shows only fights to the death. All the defeated are executed, and there are no longer any visible referees. The weapons and equipment of gladiators of this era reflect this change. The lines are less elegant, especially on the helmets. Protective equipment has become more substantial, the better to resist the increased violence of the fighting. Aesthetics have been sacrificed. On these latter sources, there are fewer *armaturae* (categories of gladiators). Some had been eliminated, but we observe new pairings, undoubtedly because of their bloodier character. This brutal *gladiatura* continued until the end, in the first half of the 5th century AD.



This unique representation of a duel between a *provocator* and a *Thraex* is displayed at the Istanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri (Turkey). (Author's drawing)

The hostility of Christians towards these murderous spectacles partly explains the disappearance of *gladiatura*. From the end of the 2nd century AD, Pope Hippolitus (*c.*AD 170–235) excluded gladiators and their trainers from the Christian community. The reason may surprise us today. Christians did not condemn *gladiatura* because it was thought immoral, because of the killings. What they disapproved of was the excitement of the crowds. Even a committed Christian could not resist it. In this regard, Saint Augustine tells the story of his friend Alypius, forced one day to come to the amphitheatre to attend a *munus*. Disgusted, he is nevertheless convinced that his mind will be able to resist the spectacle. He closes his eyes, but at the first cries of the audience, he gives in to curiosity:

> From then on he no longer looks away; he stops him complacently; he quenches his thirst at the cup of the Furies, and without knowing it, he delights in these fierce struggles; he becomes intoxicated with the scent of carnage. It was no longer the same man who had just arrived, he was one of the regulars of this barbaric crowd; he was the true companion of his fellow students. What else will I say? He became a spectator, an applauder, a furious enthusiast, he took away from this place a frightening impatience to return there. Ardent, as much and more than those who had trained him, he trained others. (*Confessions* VI.8)

On this level, theatre was even more harmful in the eyes of Christians. The actors, and even more so the mimes, expressed a reprehensible lechery, and yet they lasted until the 6th century AD. The idolatry of pagans, omnipresent in spectacles of all kinds, was also considered dangerous, because it disturbed the soul and turned it away from salvation. According to the Christian precept 'thou shalt not kill', gladiators were perceived as common assassins, and the public was their accomplice.

Having become a Christian, the emperor Constantine I (r. AD 306–37) attempted to ban gladiator combat in AD 325, but the measures taken were in reality only additional limitations. Indeed, the Romans were not ready to give up their favourite leisure activity. In AD 365, the emperor Valentinian I (r. AD 364–75) forbade sending condemned Christians to gladiator schools (*Codex Theodosianus* IX.40), which were then definitively closed by the emperor Honorius (r. AD 393–423) in AD 399. The fighting did not stop, however, and the shows lasted a few more years, until AD 439, when the emperor Valentinian III (r. AD 425–55) put a definitive end to gladiator combat. At the beginning of the 5th century AD, the scarcity of shows and schools posed a problem for those looking for gladiators. Thus, in AD 401, a certain Aurelius Simmacus experienced great difficulty in finding fighters to celebrate the praetorship of his son. Faced with his failure, he was forced to ask Honorius to provide him with some prisoners of war, but they commited suicide before appearing on the sand. This trend eventually caused disinterest among the Romans, which led to the abandonment of gladiatorial combat.

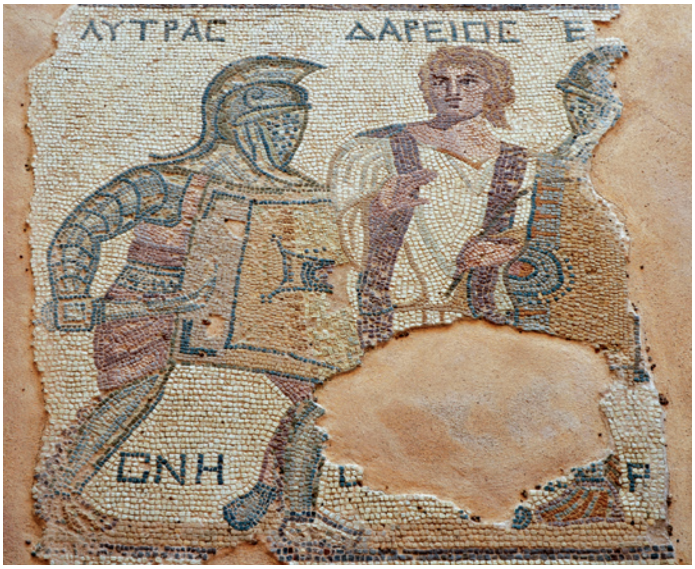
THE GLADIATORS

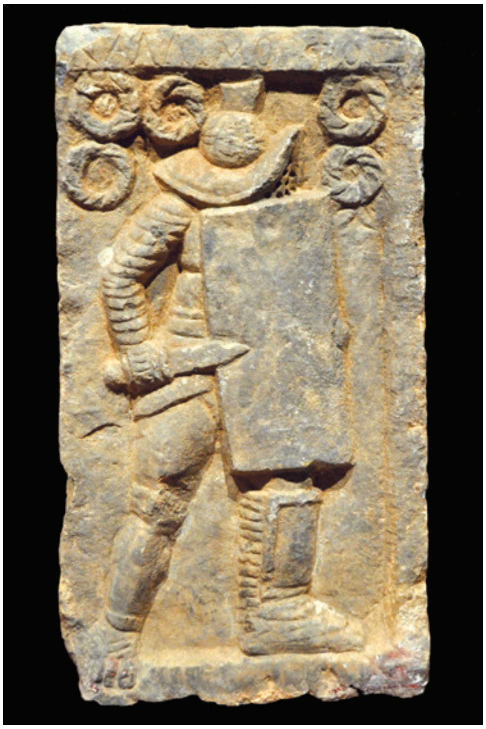
During the first four centuries of its existence, *gladiatura* mainly involved enslaved and condemned people, whose fate was to die. Even with the opening of the gladiator schools to free men, slaves and convicts remained in the majority. The image of gladiators changed from the second half of the 1st century BC, however, and even more so under the Principate. They were still outcasts, but the ablest among them were also considered true idols by the crowd. Approaching them and touching them had almost magical properties, and some high-society ladies even had a ‘good time’ with their stars. The gladiator became a popular figure, and even a model of strength and courage.

Military campaigns brought many enslaved people to Rome, but it was not possible to transform them all into gladiators. Many prisoners (*catervari*) were engaged in mass combat (*gregatim*, literally ‘in a herd’), which cannot be described as gladiatorial combat. They were not trained, and the objective of these staged battles, on land or on water, was to eliminate the unassimilable surplus. Not all slaves were a direct result of war, however. Many were born at their master’s house, or were bought at markets. With or without their consent, some masters sent their slaves to the schools to learn the trade, because they hoped to gain fame and fortune. We thus know of the troop of a *lanista* (the manager of a gladiator school) named C. Salvius Capito. Out of 19 slave-gladiators, 18 were entrusted to him by ten different masters, who paid for their training (*CIL* 9.465–66). Roman justice also sent condemned men *(damnati*, *noxii)* to the *ludi*, in an outcome referred to as *damnatio ad ludum*. It was undoubtedly the least cruel punishment of the various ‘higher tortures’ (*summa supplicia*) inflicted on convicts from lower social classes. The criminal was compelled to spend three years training and fighting. If he survived, he still had to serve two years of imprisonment in the *ludus*, but he would no longer be forced to fight in the arena. At the beginning of the Principate, the imperial administration assumed a right of pre-emption over convicts, to supply its schools and its shows.

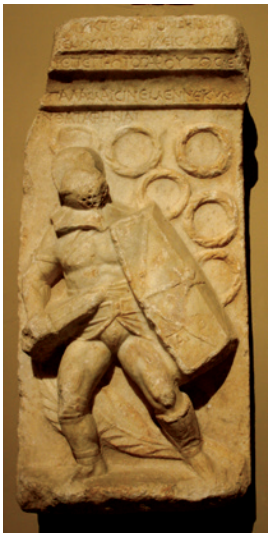
BELOW LEFT
A *retiarius* plants his trident in the belly of a *mirmillo* in this depiction on an oil lamp, dating from the beginning of the 1st century AD and held at the Museo Archeologico Castello San Giorgio (La Spezia, Italy). (N. Ledouble)

BELOW RIGHT
A *Thraex* named Lytras confronts a *mirmillo* as a referee named Dareios supervises their duel in this detail from the Kourion mosaic, dated to the end of the 3rd century AD. (N. Montacq-Velten)





A *mirmillo* identified as Mila is depicted in this artefact from the Muğla Müzesi (Turkey). (J.-M. Buscail)



Held at the Istanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri, this stele of a *secutor* depicts a Tralles helmet and the large semi-cylindrical *scutum*, featuring a metallic *umbo* and simple geometric decoration. (V. Bolchakov)

The volunteer gladiators (*auctorati*), for their part, came from all social classes. The dream of fame and fortune could convince anyone, even demobilized – or serving – soldiers. In AD 357, the emperor Constantius II (r. AD 337–61) therefore prohibited soldiers and imperial employees from entering into such commitments. All such free men had first to agree to decline socially and become infamous. They were even publicly flogged before their first performance, and their *lanista* gained the power of life and death over them. With more systematic gladiatorial killings during the 3rd and 4th centuries AD, however, we can imagine that the number of voluntary commitments decreased sharply. While most emperors disapproved of the commitment of equestrians or senators (Suetonius, *Tib.* XXXV.3), others, such as Caligula (r. AD 37–41) and Nero (r. AD 54–68), forced free men to become gladiators in spite of themselves (Suetonius, *Calig.* LIX.10; Dio, LXII.18.2; Suetonius, *Nero* XII). For equestrians and senators, there were exemptions from the Senate that spared them the infamy of the profession.

Even more unexpectedly, women fought in different *armaturae*. The first attempt, without success, took place during the reign of Augustus. Others followed, and the Romans gradually got used to seeing women tear each other apart, despite a senatorial decree of AD 11 prohibiting them from these dishonourable exhibitions before they had reached the age of 20. In AD 19, this ban was extended to women of the nobility. Under Nero, however, some women were forced to fight. Juvenal (VI.246–67) makes fun of these wanton women and their complacent husbands. Such women were perhaps called *ludiae* ('wives of *ludus*'), like the spouses of gladiators (VI.266–67). Juvenal is also the only author to use the word *gladiatrix*, on a single occasion (VI.251). In an inscription from Ostia (near the ancient port of Rome) dated to the 2nd century AD, we find the expression '*mulieres ad ferrum*' ('women under the iron') (AE 1977.153). Female gladiators were definitively excluded from amphitheatres in AD 200, by order of the emperor Septimius Severus (r. AD 193–211), after a scandal during the ten-yearly games (Dio, LXXV.16.1).

Gladiators considered to be homosexual also fought in the arena, and were known as *tunicati* after the diaphanous tunic by which they were forcibly identified. The Romans viewed homosexual men differently depending on whether they were thought to be an 'active' or 'passive' sexual partner, with the 'passive' participant being perceived as feminine and therefore dishonourable. Juvenal (*Sat.* II.143–48) testifies to the case of a certain Gracchus who had just married a musician. Gracchus came from the highest nobility, and was to be a priest, but he did not hesitate to make himself *retiarius tunicatus* temporarily:

> Ah, here is the dishonour of Rome. Gracchus does not fight in the manner of the *mirmillo*, nor with the round shield [*clipeo*] or the dagger of Thraex, he condemns disguises, he condemns and hates them; he does not hide his face under a helmet: no, he wields the

> trident, he throws the net, and if he happens to miss his shot, he seems to challenge the spectators with his face uncovered, before running through the arena fleeing: everyone recognizes it; let us believe his tunic, and from his neck hangs a golden cord attached to his elongated cap [*galero*]. The *secutor*, forced to fight him, would prefer the cruellest injury to this dishonour. (Juvenal, *Sat*. VIII.200–10)

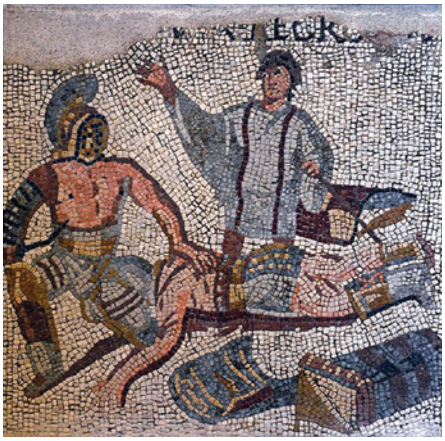
Held at the Antalya Müzesi (Turkey), this stele of a *Thraex* dates from the 2nd–3rd centuries AD. (V. Bolchakov)

In Suetonius (*Calig*. XXX.3), we also find the story of the fight between five *secutores* and five *retiarii tunicati*. The *retiarii tunicati* offered no resistance, but after their death was ordered one of them took up his trident and struck down all five *secutores* in turn, which provoked the anger of Caligula. The *tunicati* fought with all the panoplies, but the majority of surviving images show *Thraeces*. Wearing the infamous 'female' tunic placed these men in the lowest rank in this community, already considered the dregs of society. Their daily life must have been very difficult; several texts inform us of this, notably an extract from Seneca (*Natural Questions* VII.31), and a satire by Juvenal, the so-called 'Oxford Fragment':

> Pure and more honest than your Lares is therefore the school of the *lanista*, since, in his troop, Psyllus must keep a good distance from Eupholius. Much better: the nets do not mix with an impure tunic, and he who is used to fighting naked does not place his shoulder guards and the trident that strikes the adversary in the same cell. The most remote part of the school receives these beings, and even in prison they have special constraints. (*Sat*. VI.Ox7–13)

Free gladiators trained at the schools, but were permitted to return home. It was of course different for slaves or convicts, who slept in cells. Each school also had weapons rooms, a training track, a prison and a mortuary. A post of soldiers was never very far away, in the event of a revolt (which were very rare under the Principate). Discipline was severe, but the gladiators were relatively well treated and well fed, as they represented a large financial investment for the *lanista*. The schools were populated by people from all parts of the Empire. For example, alongside the Gauls, it was possible to find at the school of Nîmes and Orange (in the south of France) men from Greece, Egypt, Arabia, Asia, Spain and Thrace. They all had one thing in common: whether free or slave, they were 'voluntary' fighters at heart. It was indeed difficult to train men to kill each other if they did not have psychological and physical predispositions to do so. The training they underwent was long, arduous and dangerous, and it took courage and willpower to complete it. A school owner or games organizer (*editor*) could not risk producing frightened fighters, seeking to save their own lives rather than winning the fight. While a few had to be motivated with the whip, most were satisfied with being able to express their sadistic and violent instincts, their murderous and suicidal impulses.

This artefact from the Hierapolis Arkeoloji Müzesi (Pamukkale, Turkey) depicts a duel between a *scissor* and a *dimachaerus*. (N. Montacq-Velten)



A *Thraex* triumphs over a *mirmillo* in this mosaic from the 2nd century AD, held at the Teatro Romano di Verona (Italy). (Author's photograph)

THE *ARMATURAE*

Gladiatura was regulated over time. After the reforms of Augustus, it entered a period of stability, with few subsequent innovations. Under the Principate, we know of about 15 specialities. Each had defined oppositions, proven fighting techniques, and equipment designed accordingly to offer balanced fights, and therefore high-quality shows. No doubt there were a few others, more confidential: certified or occasional local variants, about which we will probably never know anything. Not all of them were created at the same time; some disappeared, others appeared or evolved. We will not return here to what was said on the origins of the ten listed *armaturae* that existed during the first four centuries of *gladiatura*, discussed in the author's earlier study (Gilbert 2022). In this book, we examine the later evolution of those *armaturae* that continued, as well as the new *armaturae* that emerged in the final four centuries of *gladiatura*.

Overall, we do not know the precise reasons for the formation of some *armaturae* and the disappearance of others, but hypotheses can sometimes be put forward. Historians have repeatedly attempted to draw up the family tree of the *armaturae*, but none is completely satisfactory. Nothing confirms, for example, that the *provocator* was an evolution of the *Samnes*, on the basis of the *provocator* wearing a breastplate, as this ancient Italic population wore

A

GLADIATORS, *c.*AD 20

(1) *Eques*

The *eques* has lost his scaled armour (*lorica squamata*) and wears only a tunic. It is white according to a little-known fresco from Pompeii, but other colours are possible. The *eques* was the only gladiator who wore shoes; they are grey on this same fresco. The mail *manica*, held on the arm by straps, is inspired by a beautiful sculpture at the Museo Nacional de Arte Romano (Mérida, Spain; see p.41). At this time, the cuff extends beyond the elbow. A Chieti helmet is worn, while the light shield is the *parma equestris*, made of cowhide. The *eques* is armed with a javelin. The sword is not visible; it had to be handed to him during the combat phase on foot.

(2) *Thraex*

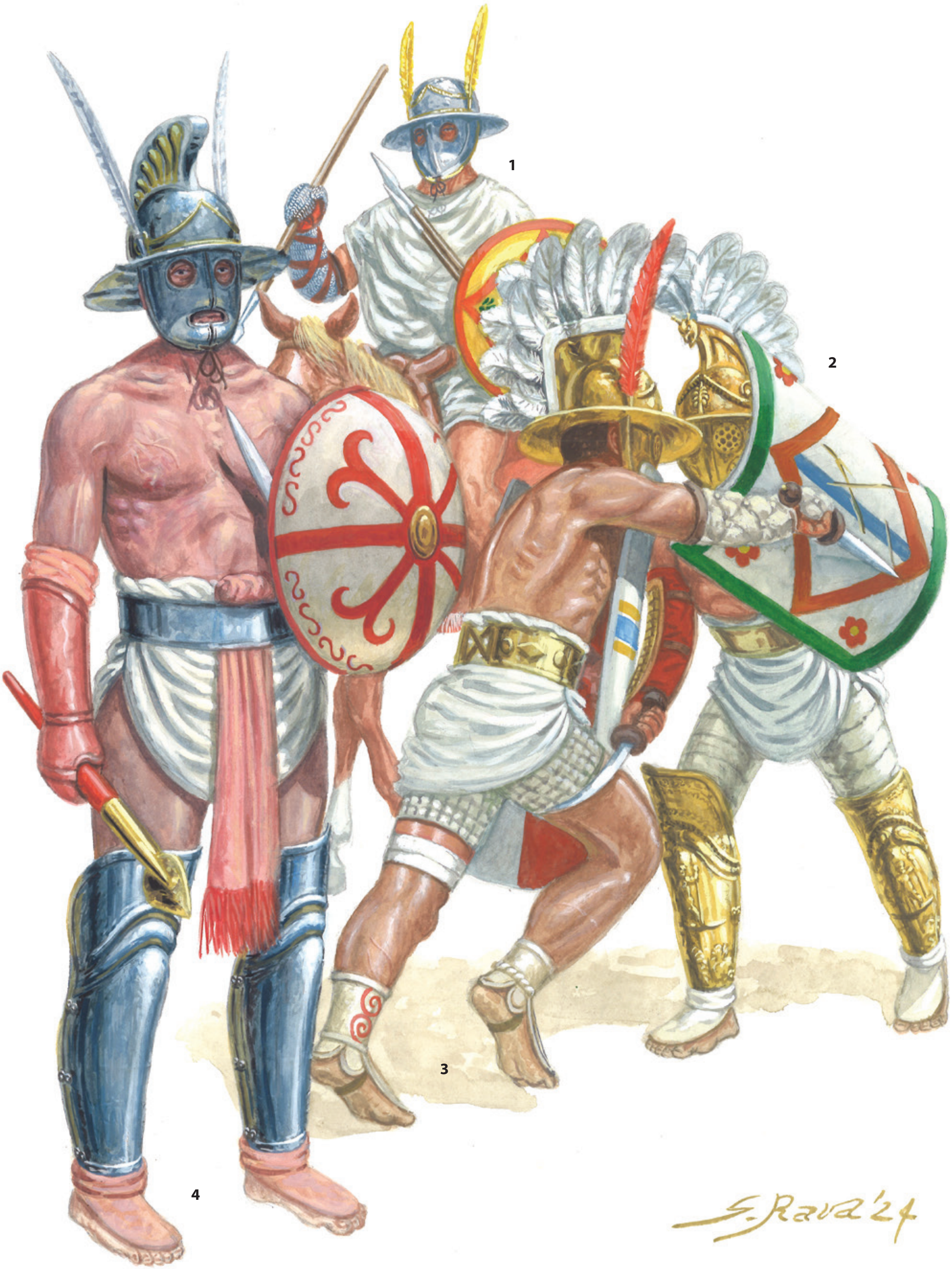
This fight between two gladiators is inspired by the Zliten mosaic (Libya). The curved blade of the *Thraex*'s sword (*sica*) allows it to go around the opponent's leg to injure the back of the thigh. Its shape is inspired by a wooden training sword unearthed in a military camp in Germany. On his head the *Thraex* wears a fully decorated Chieti helmet, following a surviving example found in the gladiator school of Pompeii. The griffin head identifies his *armatura*. The feather crest, and the long hair, are reproduced after the Storax monument (Chieti, Italy; see p.12). By this time, the *Thraex*'s shield is square; its decoration is based on that shown on the Stabian Gate relief. The bronze belt fastens at the back. The *Thraex* wears two greaves modelled on examples from the gladiator school of Pompeii; they are decorated with figures of Jupiter and Neptune, and cover the lower part of the thighs, which are encircled in strips of fabric.

(3) *Mirmillo*

The *Thraex*'s opponent is a *mirmillo* who also wears a Chieti helmet found in Pompeii. The feathers are planted in a wooden formwork fixed to the top of the crest with pins. His defensive equipment includes a large *scutum*, identical to those of the legionaries, and a small greave in embossed leather, laced on the back of the left foot. The decoration of his belt and the quilted shorts, visible under the loincloth, are reproduced from a bas-relief from the amphitheatre of Durrës (Albania; see p.14). His sword is straight, with a blade *c.*30cm in length. The cuff is an original, padded model. It is inspired by a relief from Castrum Novum (Etruria, Italy).

(4) *Hoplomachus*

This depiction is inspired by a terracotta figurine (see p.51), as well as the Castrum Novum relief (see p.50). These two sources show the prototype of the Chieti helmet, with the first visor added to an Attico-Boeotian helmet, inspired by that of the *hoplomachus* sculpted on the Fiano Romano relief (Italy; see Gilbert 2022: 59). This visor is roughly shaped like a face, with openings for the eyes and mouth. The Naples figurine still shows old characteristics of this panoply, including this belt-scarf which hangs in front of the loincloth, and an old model of short armband, which does not exceed the elbow. The pink colour depicted here is also visible on the statuette. The gladiator wears two metal greaves that also cover the lower thighs, which are otherwise bare. The shield motif comes from a fresco in Pompeii, which has now disappeared. The spearhead is modelled from examples found in Pompeii.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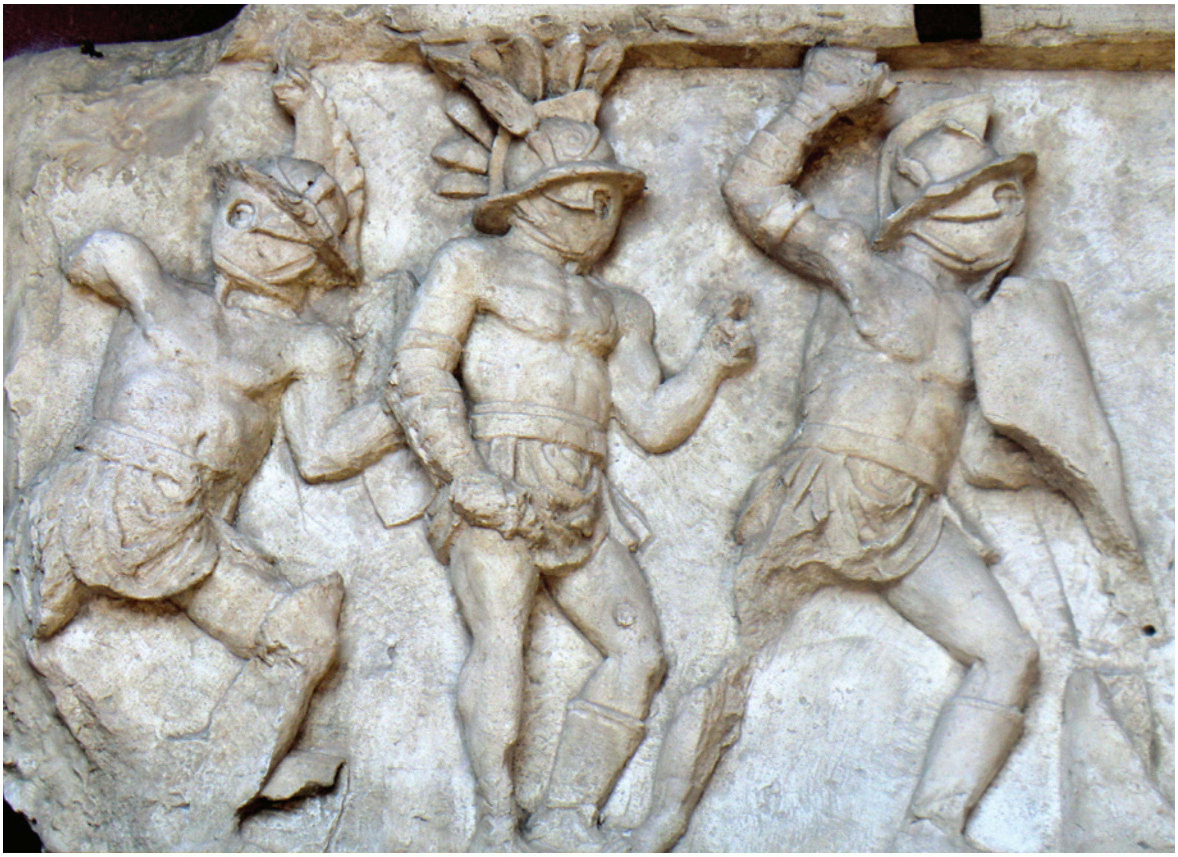


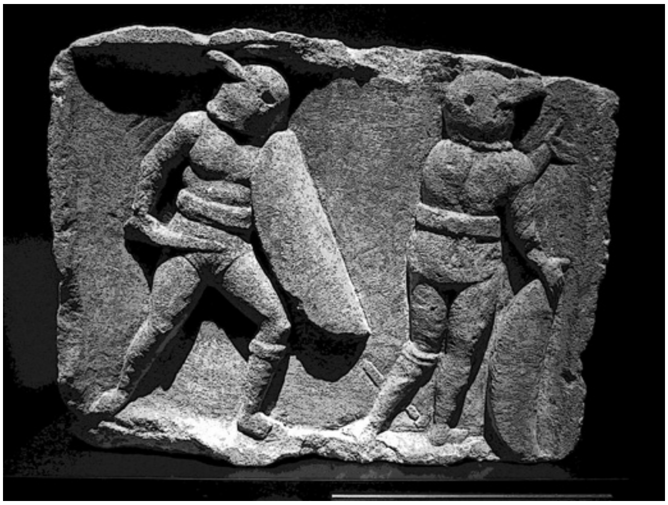
A detail from the Storax monument Chieti, Italy), showing a *Thraex* (left) and two *mirmillones*. These were the two highest-profile *armaturae* at the beginning of the Principate. (Author's photograph)

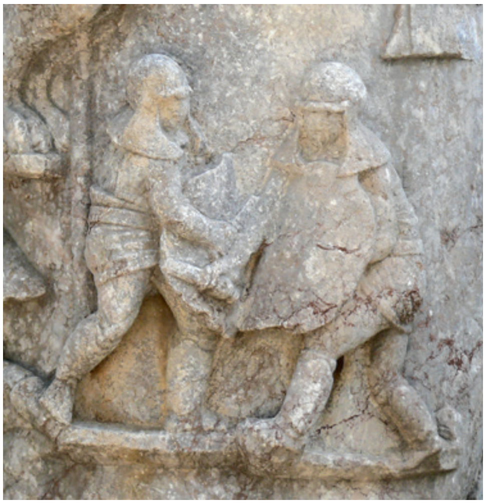
in the 4th and 3rd centuries BC. Similarly, nothing confirms that the *mirmillo* was a descendant of the *Gallus*. At best, we can have reasoned convictions, but these remain hypothetical in the absence of proof. It is even likely that these filiations (if there were any) were not vertical and linear, but branched and multiple.

Rare before the 1st century AD, ancient images of gladiators multiplied considerably thereafter, which allows the present-day observer to know these *armaturae* and their panoplies well during the Principate. This iconography is biased, however. It shows us more readily the 'star' categories, and leaves in the shadows a good half of the listed *armaturae*. This observation is certainly representative of the programmes of the Roman *munera*. For example, the monument of Lusius Storax (Chieti, Italy) shows only four types of gladiators, out of 19 fighters represented. In contrast, among the most exhaustive testimonies, an inscription from Venosa in Italy (*CIL* 9.465–66) records up to ten categories at the same time. Generally speaking, it must have been rare for a school to train men in all disciplines. Therefore, a show *editor* might not have been able to offer a wide variety of gladiators. In this case, supply limited demand.

The *Samnis* and the *Gallus*

In the earlier volume, we discussed the case of the *Samnes* and the *Galli*, who were the first known *armaturae*. The final mentions of these two specialities date from the first half of the 1st century AD. At the beginning of our period, these were therefore two dying *armaturae*, which then disappeared. The





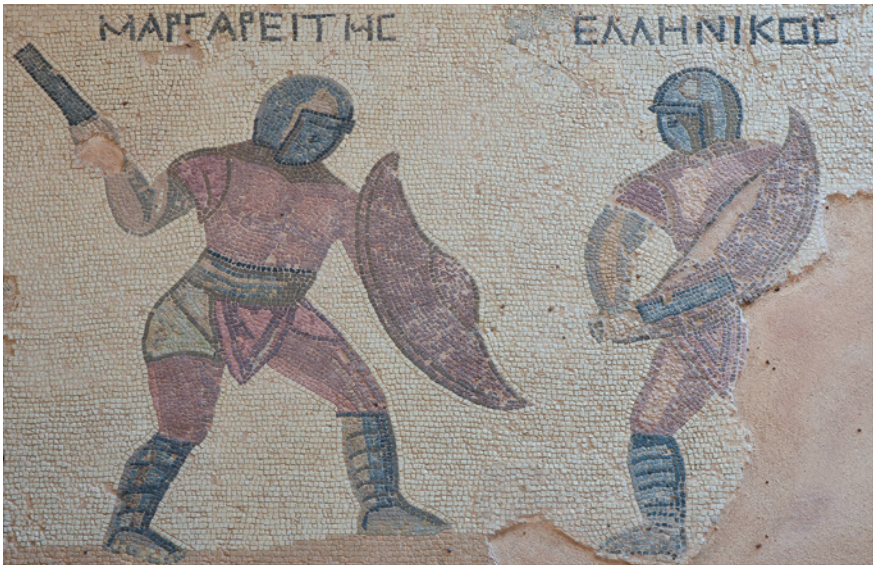
ABOVE LEFT
Held at the Limburgs Museum (Venlo, Netherlands), this relief depicting a duel of *essedarii* wearing ovoid helmets dates from the 1st or 2nd century AD. (Author's drawing)

ABOVE RIGHT
Held at the Side Arkeoloji Müzesi (Turkey) and dated to the 3rd century AD, this artefact depicts a duel between *essedarii*. Both gladiators wear the helmet of the *provocatores*. (© Ad Meskens/Wikimedia Commons)

epigraphy still testifies to their existence at the time of Nero. An inscription from Rome (AE 1988.27) mentions the *Samnis* Amanus, of the Neronian school, three times victorious and twice crowned. From the first half of the 1st century AD, the Venosa list (*CIL* 9.466) also mentions a *Samnis* named Inclutus, five times victorious and twice crowned. The latest images date from the Augustan era. Like all ethnic *armaturae*, the *Samnes* fought among themselves; the *Galli* too, but the latter probably also faced the first *retiarii*.

The *essedarius*

Unlike the aforementioned two *armaturae*, the *essedarius* continued to enjoy a long and distiguished career. The original use of the Celtic chariot, which made this gladiator original, was very quickly abandoned, already by the end of the 1st century BC; we never see it depicted. We can assume that the first *essedarii* were *Galli* gladiators mounted on chariots captured and exhibited in Rome, after a victory over the Gauls. To distinguish itself – and survive – this *armatura* offered a different style of fighting: less technical, but more

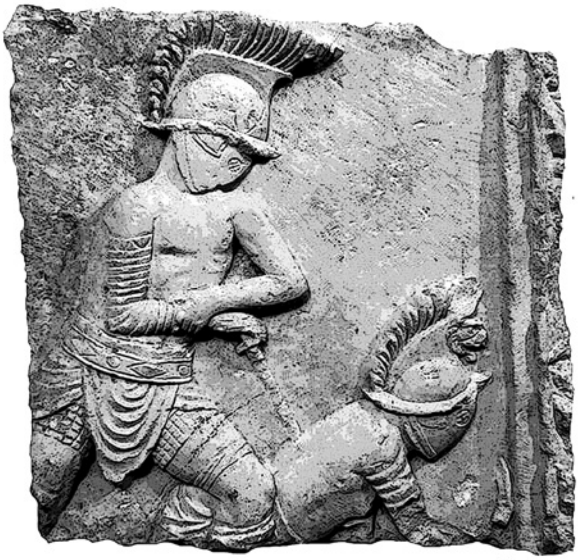


Dating from the end of the 3rd century AD, this mosaic detail from the House of the Gladiators (Kourion, Cyprus) depicts combat between two *essedarii*. The lettering spells out their names: 'Margarites' on the left and 'Hellenikos' on the right. (N. Montacq-Velten) violent, with a sword without a point that necessitated striking only with the edges (the Romans preferred 'thrusting' fencing, that is to say by delivering blows with the point). This singular sword is still very clearly visible on a mosaic at the House of the Gladiators (Kourion, Cyprus). A graffito from Pompeii (Italy) suggests that the *essedarius* fought first with a spear or javelin (on the chariot?), and then on foot, with the sword. With the face of the *essedarius* being very exposed to blows coming from above, such gladiators were perhaps the first to wear a helmet with a full mask, which then became widespread in the other *armaturae*. His shield was oval and curved, like those of the legionaries at the end of the Consulate. The identification of this panoply and this *armatura* is confirmed by the stele of the *essedarius* Eirenion at the Afrodisias Müzesi (Turkey), dated to the 2nd century AD. Indeed, fights involving *essedarii* seem to have been very popular in the East, more than in the West.

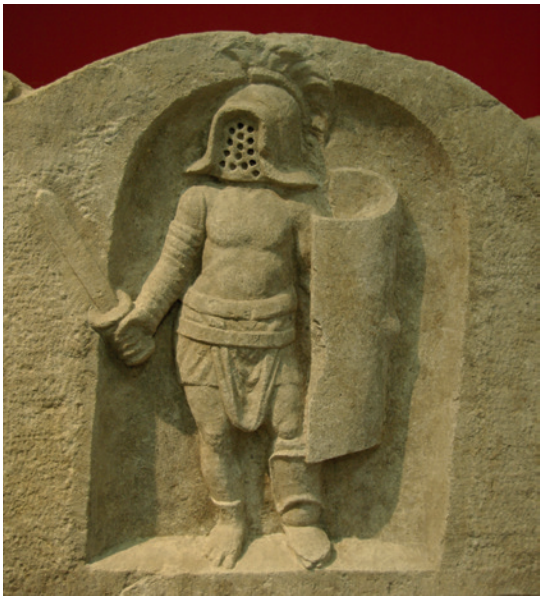
The *mirmillo*

The *armatura* of the *mirmillo* (aka *myrmillo*, *mormillo* or even *murmillo*) was undoubtedly the first 'technical' category, appearing around the middle of the 1st century BC. For a brief time, he faced the *retiarius* when the latter *armatura* was created under Augustus. Often referred to by the names *contraretiarius* or *contrarete*, this unsatisfactory duel was abandoned, probably under Caligula (Suetonius, *Calig.* LV). The *mirmillo* retained only the *Thraex* and the *hoplomachus* as traditional adversaries, with the *mirmillo–Thraex* duel remaining a staple until the end of the Principate. During the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, the *mirmillo* was pitted against a new adversary: the *provocator*. Ammian Marcellinus mentions (XXXIII.6) the *mirmillo* in the 4th century BC.

Late images of the *mirmillo* are rare. Examples include a stele showing a *mirmillo* in combat with a *Thraex* from the Neues Museum (Berlin, Germany; see p.19), and the Kourion mosaic. The identification of this gladiator and his equipment does not pose any particular problem. Several steles representing a *mirmillo*, indicated as such in the inscriptions, show us a large rectangular,



BELOW LEFT
Dating from the 1st century AD and now held at the Durrës Archaeological Museum (Albania), this frieze fragment from the amphitheatre of ancient Dyrrachium depicts a *mirmillo* (left) killing a *Thraex*. The victor wears padded shorts under his loincloth. (Author's drawing)



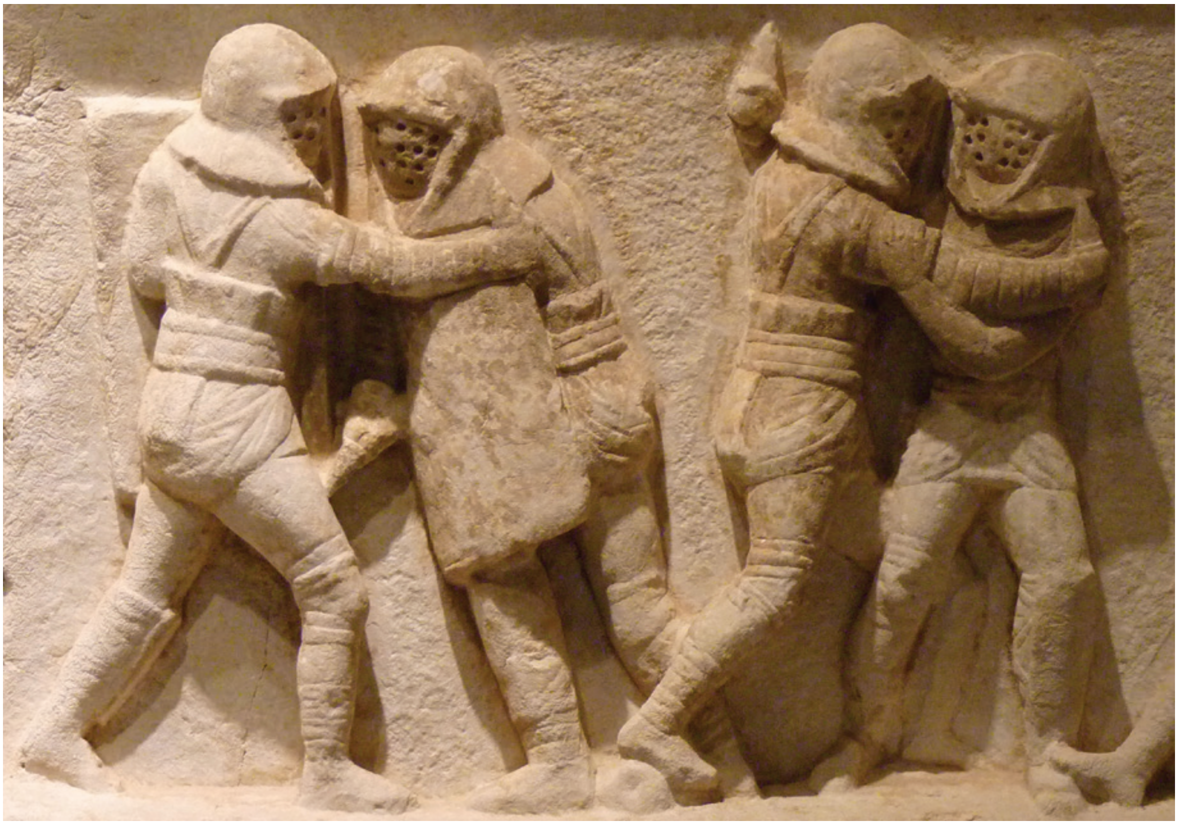
BELOW RIGHT
Held at the Museo archeologico nazionale di Aquileia (Italy), this stele of the *mirmillo* Quintus Sossius Albus dates from the 2nd century AD. (G. Habasque)

curved shield and a helmet with an angular crest. This is the case on the funerary monument of Quintus Sossius Albus at the Museo archeologico nazionale di Aquileia (Italy; see p.14), dating from the 2nd century AD, and that of Plotinopolis, at the Hermitage Museum (St Petersburg, Russia). The *mirmillo*'s equipment includes an armband, a small greave worn on the left calf, which leaves the knee exposed, and a straight sword.

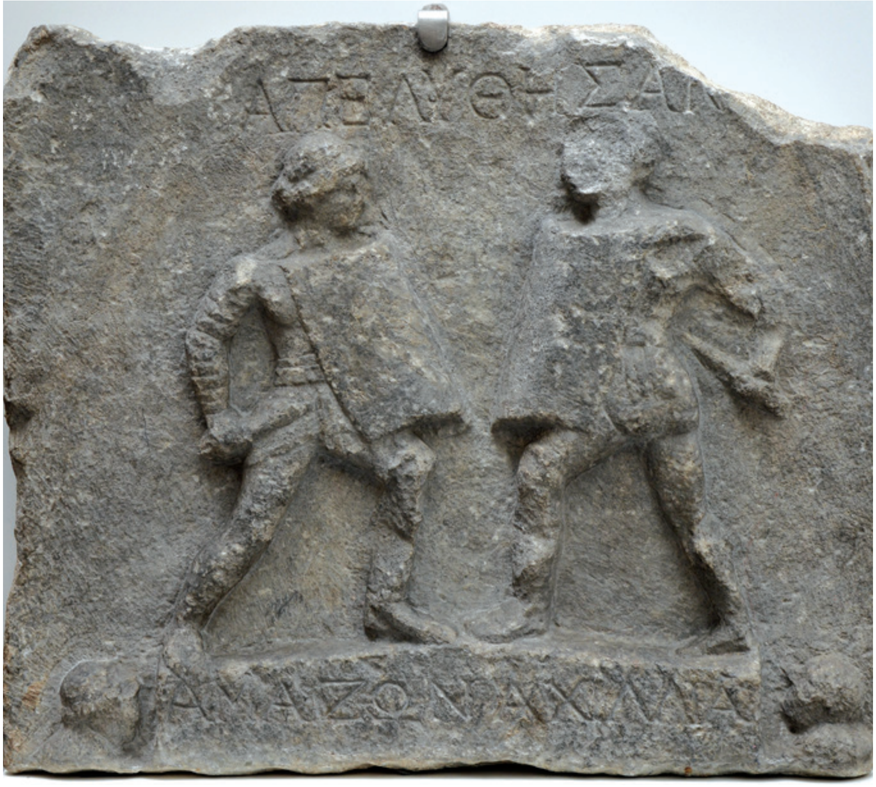
Already mentioned in the earlier volume, an extract from Festus suggests that the *armatura* of the *mirmillo* would have formerly been that of the *Gallus*. This is a song that a *retiarius* would have sung when confronting his adversary (whose armour is not mentioned): *Non te peto, piscem peto, quid me fugis, Galle?* ('It's not you I'm angry with, it's your fish, why are you running away from me, Gaul?') This obscure passage is most certainly misinterpreted. This mysterious 'fish' is the origin of an idea that is erroneous but widely accepted today. Commenting on the extract from Festus, the 8th-century writer Paul the Deacon (359.l-5) imagined that it must have been a decoration on the helmet of the *mirmillo*. We have also sought to explain the etymology of the word *mirmillo* with the name of a fish; but nothing is certain. It is possible that this fish is actually the helmet of the *secutor*, another adversary of the *retiarius*, and which strongly resembles a fish, with its small round eyes and its crest in the shape of a dorsal fin. Perhaps this *secutor* was Gallic (*gallus*), unrelated to the armour of the *Galli*.

The *provocator*

Like the *essedarius*, it was in the East that the *provocator* found his audience (his name appears only once in the Pompeii programmes). The



Held at the Burdur Arkeoloji Müzesi (Turkey), and dating from the 3rd century AD, this artefact depicts two duelling pairs of *provocatores*. (N. Montacq-Velten)



Held at the British Museum (London, England), this artefact depicts a duel between two women, Amazon and Achillia, wearing the outfits of the *provocatores*. Their helmets are placed at their feet, to better show their faces and feminine hairstyles. (S. Lagrange)

number of monuments depicting this gladiator is revealing. This *armatura* is easily identified thanks to the stele of the *provocator* Anicetus, at the Musei Capitolini (Rome, Italy), or that of Euprepes in Erdek (Turkey). The equipment is clearly visible. The *provocator*'s shield, a *parma*, which had flat

B

GLADIATORS, AD 40–50

(1) *Secutor*

The *secutor* replaced the *mirmillo* as an opponent of the *retiarius*. While the weaponry remained the same, the helmet changed, as did the fighting techniques. The bronze-and-iron helmet shown here is modelled on one discovered in Pompeii, as is the greave, which is decorated with a representation of Minerva and worn over leather ankle protection. The lamellar cuff covers almost the entire right arm, except the shoulder. The dagger, short with an ivory handle, is also based on an artefact from the gladiator school of Pompeii. The *scutum* is inspired by a painting from the amphitheatre of Pompeii; the central *spina* is reinforced by an iron *umbo*.

(2) *Paegnarius*

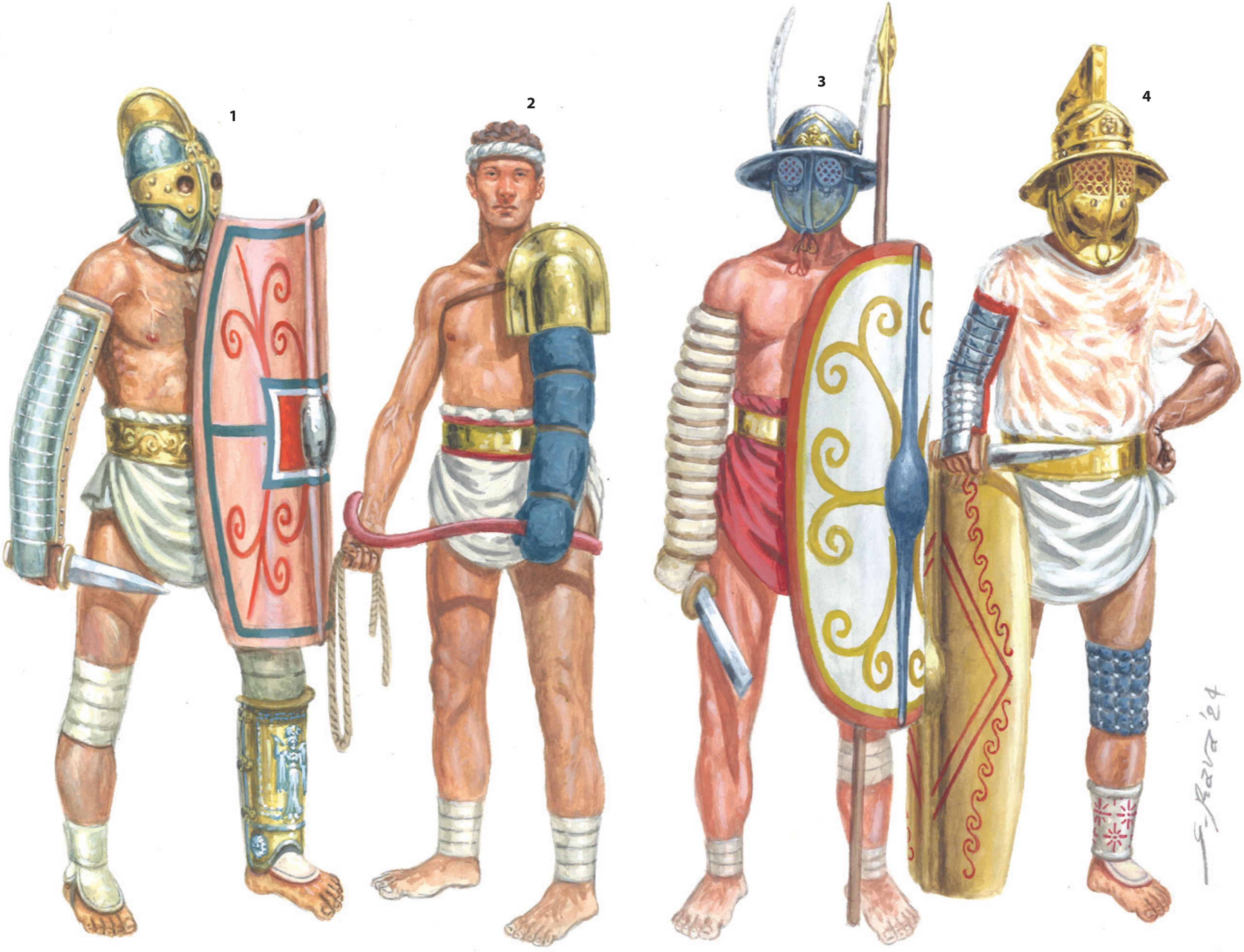
This gladiator is reproduced after a relief from Amiternum (Italy). At this time, the two adversaries undoubtedly had the same 'weapons': a leather whip in the right hand and a curved stick in the left, to ward off the opponent's whip. The head is protected only by a headband. The left arm is covered by a padded sleeve, and undoubtedly a metal shell on the shoulder, a bit like the *retiarii*. He has no other protection.

(3) *Essedarius*

The *essedarius* used the Chieti helmet, as clearly shown in an oil-lamp depiction (see p.52); this example is decorated with a *putto* on the front, based on a fragment of a Pompeii helmet. The gladiator carries a large oval *scutum*. The shield decoration is visible on the Zliten mosaic; scrollwork was widely depicted during the 1st century AD. He holds a spear to initiate combat, as a graffito from Pompeii suggests. Found in the gladiator school there, the tip is bronze. His main weapon is a sword lacking a point, intended to strike only with the edges.

(4) *Mirmillo tunicatus*

This *mirmillo* is largely inspired by a painting from the tomb of the aedile (magistrate) Vestorius Priscus, in Pompeii. His headgear is a distinctive bronze helmet, without a plume, of the type on display at the British Museum. He wears a transparent muslin tunic, tucked into the loincloth and tightened by the belt; the garment indicates that this gladiator is *tunicatus*. Its cuff covers the arm, including the biceps, and is worn over a red fabric sleeve. He also wears a studded leather kneepad, and white leather ankle protectors; the one on the left leg is taller. The *scutum* has convex sides; its decoration is noticeable on the Pompeii tomb painting. His dagger comes from the findings of the barracks.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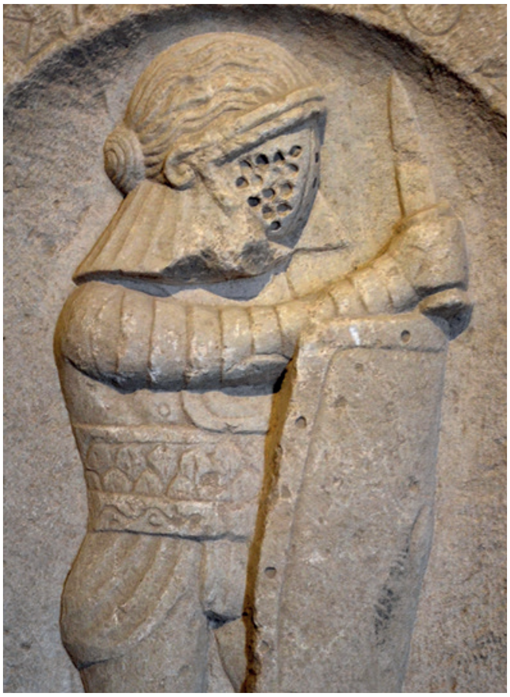
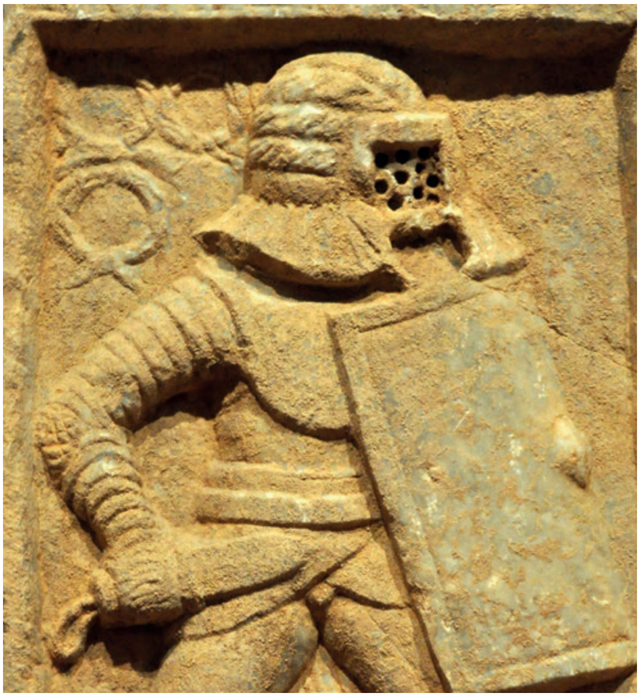




ABOVE LEFT
Held at the Anadolu Medeniyetleri Müzesi (Ankara, Turkey), this stele of the *provocator* Chrisampelos dates from the 2nd–3rd centuries AD. (J.-M. Buscail)

ABOVE RIGHT
Held at the Muğla Müzesi, this representation of a *provocator* dates from the 3rd century AD. Note the helmet and the segmented *manica*, with the flexible piece of mail on the elbow. (J.-M. Buscail)

or convex edges, was smaller and therefore lighter than the large *scutum* of the *mirmillo* and *secutor*. This weight saving allowed the *provocator* to use his shield as an offensive weapon, by hitting his opponent with the edges, as shown in several images. *Hoplomachia* was all the more violent, and therefore more spectacular for the public; but it required the wearing of a pectoral attached to the back by straps, to protect the gladiators against these very traumatic blows.

The *provocator*'s helmet was also an original model under the Principate, since it took the shape of the helmets worn in the Roman Army, that is to say with a very accentuated neck protector going down low, and a frontal reinforcement arch. Except on a mosaic preserved at Zliten (Libya), surviving depictions of the helmets of *provocatores* never have a crest, undoubtedly the better to pass under an opponent's shield held at chest or head height. This gladiator wore an armband, and armour on the left leg only, over a pair of padded underpants. In the 2nd century AD, the helmet evolved, and long weighted straps now hung down the gladiator's back.

The *provocatores* fought among themselves. It was not until the 2nd or 3rd century AD that they fought the *mirmillones*. We also know of a unique bas-relief from Istanbul (Turkey) that shows a confrontation between a *provocator* and a *Thraex*. Did the *provocator* fight against each of the *armaturae* of the *Thraex–mirmillo–hoplomachus* triad? We cannot specify the reason for these pairings, other than perhaps the need for novelty. The reason might have been tactical. Indeed, in images dated to the 2nd–4th centuries AD, we no longer see the *provocator* wielding his shield in an offensive manner. Instead, the shield was held straight ahead, to protect the body, as the *mirmillo* did. All contemporary images show the *provocator* adopting the same defensive position, well straightened, stabbing frontally with his sword, over the shoulder, under the armpit or towards the thigh.

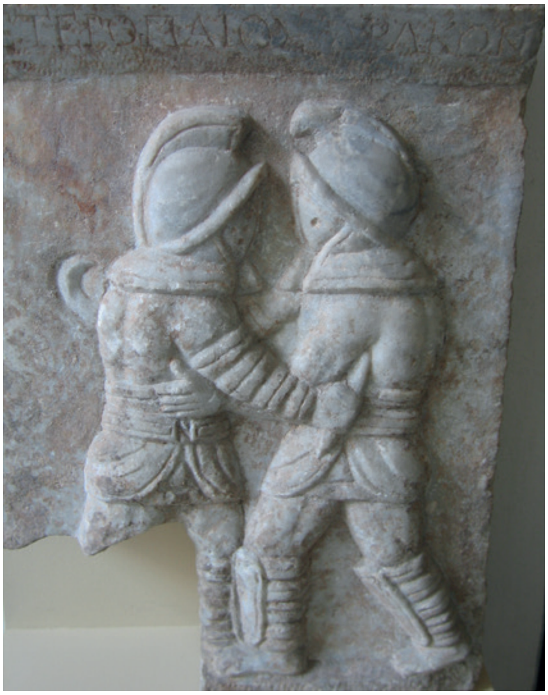
The *Thraex*

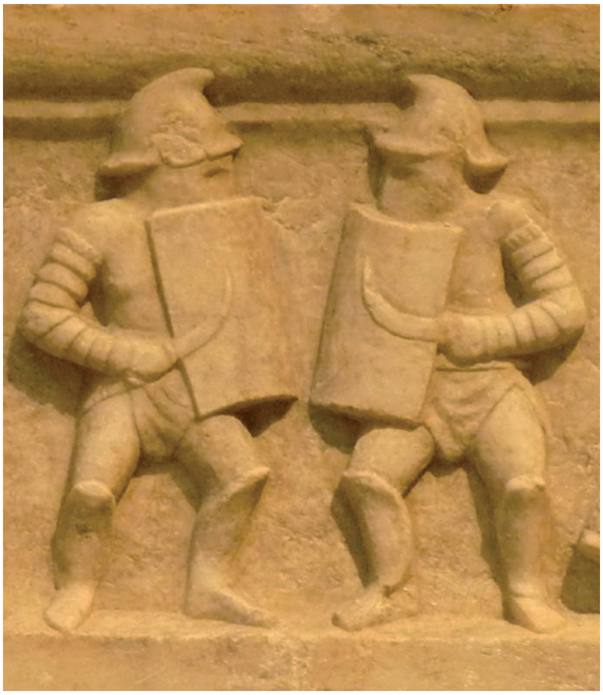
In terms of the number of images and literary occurrences, the *Thraex* is one of the best-known gladiators. This *armatura*'s existence is ancient, and its name refers us to 'ethnic' *gladiatura*. Its appearance was settled at the beginning of the Principate. The *Thraex*'s characteristic equipment is well known from the stele of the gladiator M. Antonius Exochus, now lost, but some drawings of which remain. Over padded breeches or leg bands (*fasciae*), he wore two high greaves, covering up to the mid-thighs, to compensate for the limited protection offered by his small square, curved shield. The sword arm bore an armband. The *Thraex*'s sword had a curved or angular blade, to better bypass his opponent's defences and injure him. Another emblematic piece of his outfit was his helmet. It was now closed by a visor, and usually displayed a griffin head at the end of the helmet crest. Several *Thraex* helmets have been discovered in Pompeii.

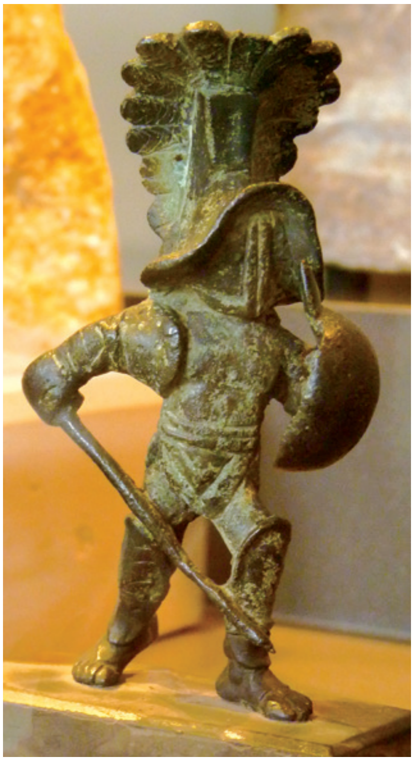
As with all ethnic gladiators, the *Thraex*'s first duels took place within the same *armatura*, and they continued under the Principate, although they were little illustrated. His duels with the *mirmillo* and the *hoplomachus* (announced for the first time on a programme from Pompeii: *CIL* 4.2508) are more represented. We still find the *Thraex* in the 3rd century AD, but much more rarely than in the previous period. Dated to the 3rd century AD, a stele at the Neues Museum shows the *Thraex* Drakon, recognizable by his weapons, fighting hand-to-hand against a *mirmillo*. Thanks to the Kourion mosaic (see p.7), we know that this duel continued into the 4th century AD, which undoubtedly makes the *Thraex* the longest-lived gladiator. Two late stelae held at the Hierapolis Arkeoloji Müzesi (Pamukkale, Turkey) both show a gladiator armed with a *sica* (a sword with a curved blade), but lacking his other signifiers: the square shield and the griffin head. In this case, we will propose a little further on (see p.33) another *armatura* for this fighter, who should therefore not be identified as a *Thraex*.

BELOW LEFT
Dating from the late 3rd or early 4th century AD and held at the Neues Museum (Berlin, Germany), this relief depicts a duel between a *mirmillo* and a *Thraex* (right), whose *sica* and helmet surmounted by the griffin head can be recognized. (N. Montacq-Velten)

BELOW RIGHT
This rare representation of a duel between two *Thraeces* is held at the New Archaeological Museum of Patras (Greece). (N. Montacq-Velten)







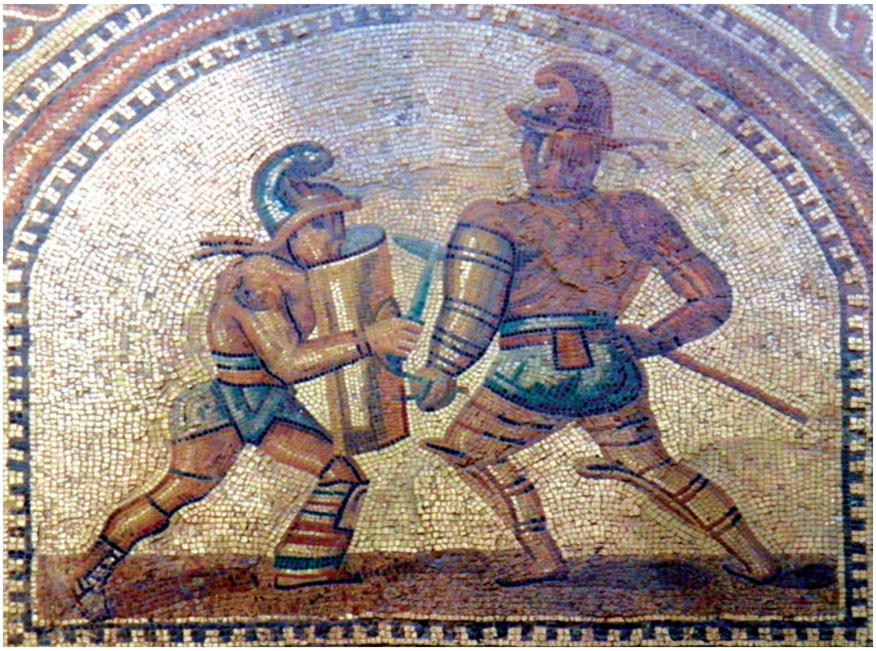
Dated to the 1st century AD, this statuette of a *hoplomachus* is preserved at the Neues Museum. (N. Montacq-Velten)

The *hoplomachus*

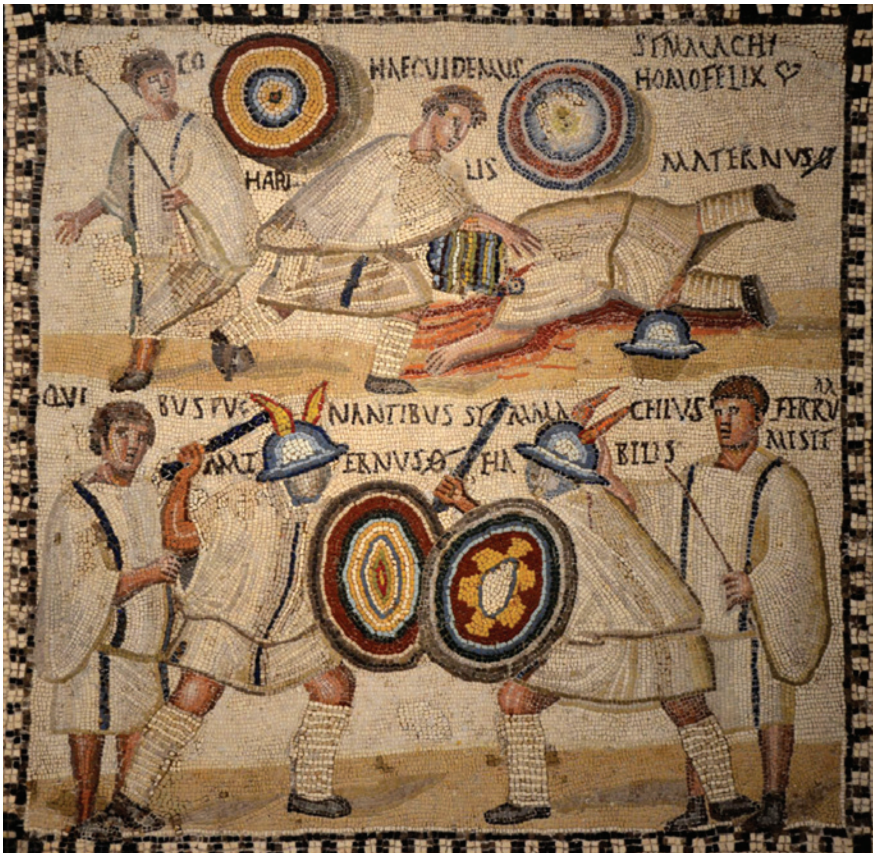
There are some images of the *hoplomachus* from the second half of the 1st century BC, but we have to wait until the end of the reign of Augustus to discover the first literary mention in an inscription from Venosa (*CIL* 9.466). Suetonius is the first author to mention this *armatura* in the context of Caligula's life (*Calig*. XXXV). Knowing that the *hoplomachus* fought the *Thraex* and the *mirmillo*, it is easy to find images of these clashes and to list the *hoplomachus*' weaponry. Our gladiator wears an armband, high greaves identical to those of the *Thraex*, attached to bands surrounding the legs or padded breeches, and a helmet generally decorated with a crest of feathers or horsehair, similar to that of the *mirmillo*.

The *hoplomachus* first fought with the spear (*hasta*), which was used against his two adversaries, the *Thraex* and the *mirmillo*. Images of this last duel show this weapon almost systematically, while they are very rare. If by chance the *hoplomachus* lost his spear during the duel, he also had a sword, held in the same hand that gripped the shield, while his rivals could only count on a single offensive weapon. This heavy armament is undoubtedly explained by the much more restrictive use of the small, hemispherical *parma*, which restricted the movement of his left arm. We should therefore rather speak of a 'rebalancing of forces'.

It is difficult to specify the date of the disappearance of the *hoplomachus*. Artemidorus does not mention this *armatura* in his *Oneirokritika*, written in the 2nd century AD, yet a *hoplomachus* still appears on the list of a college from the time of Commodus, and a gladiator of this type is visible on a panel of the mosaic held by the Museum Römerhalle (Bad Kreuznach, Germany), dating from the mid-3rd century AD.



Dating from the mid-3rd century AD, this depiction of a *mirmillo* (left) fighting a *hoplomachus* is held at the Museum Römerhalle (Bad Kreuznach, Germany). Note the *mirmillo*'s multicoloured gaiter and his bronze mail bracers, complete with a leather shell on the shoulder. The *hoplomachus*, viewed from behind, wears a second padded *manica* on his left arm, intended to support the shield he has just lost. (Author's photograph)



Held at the Museo Arqueológico Nacional (Madrid, Spain), this mosaic from the 4th century AD depicts the phases of a duel between *equites*. (Ch. Vaginay-Darnetz)

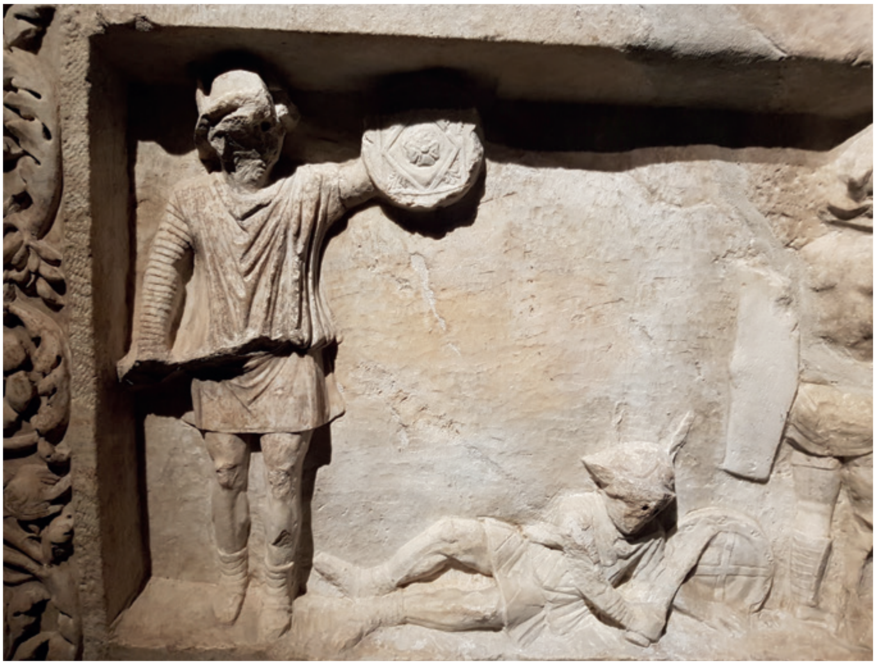
The *eques*

It is rare to find the *eques* mentioned in literature or epigraphy, nor is it common to see images of these gladiators on horseback. On the Storax monument, the Stabian Gate in Pompeii (today at the Museo archeologico nazionale di Napoli, Italy), and even on the Zliten mosaic, these horsemen are always shown first, to signify that they opened the hostilities. Isidore of Seville also confirms this (*Origins* XVIII.53), specifying that the two *equites* entered the arena through the opposite doors of the amphitheatre, and rushed at each other.

In the earlier study, we saw that the gladiator on horseback wore military equipment, including a scale breastplate *(lorica squamata)*. Probably towards the end of the reign of Augustus, this armour was abandoned, and the *eques* only wore the tunic. Unlike the other gladiators, he was not shirtless. He was also the only one who wore shoes. He was helmeted, but without a crest, with only a feather on each side. Although he lacked metal greaves, we sometimes observe padding on the legs from the 2nd century AD. At this time, the use of the armband became less systematic.

The *eques* was armed with a round cowhide shield (*parma equestris*) and a sword. He began his duel, however, with a spear or a handful of javelins. It was strictly forbidden to touch or injure his horse during this first phase of the fight (*prolusio*), which inevitably concluded on foot. On this subject, we have already suggested an explanation in the earlier volume. The mounts were equipped with Gallic saddles, and undoubtedly richly crafted harnesses, such as we know in Roman military cavalry. The horse's head was sometimes protected by a chamfer.

The end of a fight between *equites* is depicted in this artefact from the mausoleum of Cnaeus Clovatius, near the Stabian Gate in Pompeii (today at the Museo archeologico nazionale di Napoli, Italy). (G. Habasque)

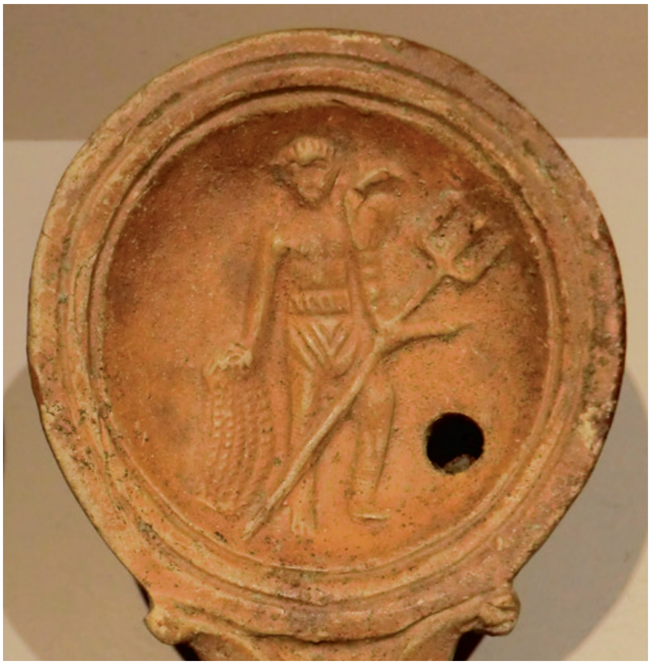


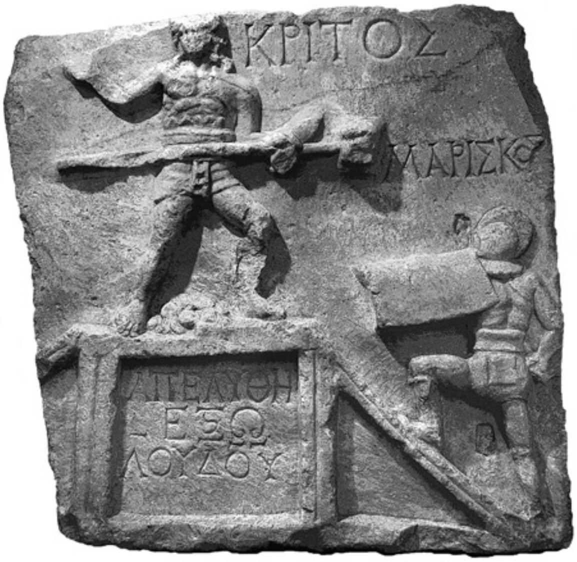
The *retiarius*

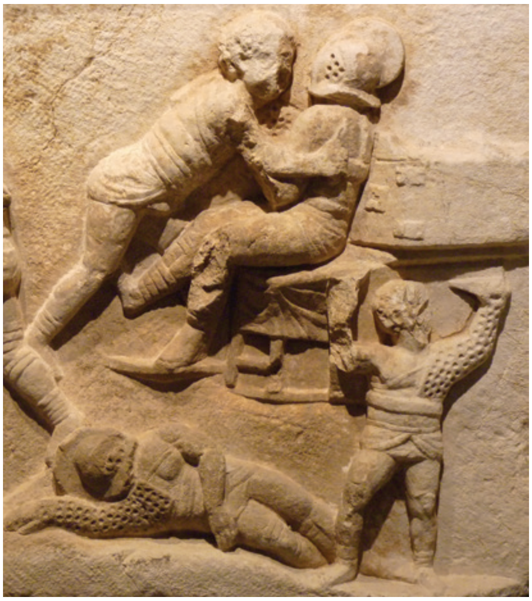
By the beginning of the 1st century AD the figure of the *proto-retiarius*, helmeted and armoured, had given way to a new gladiator stripped of all his defensive measures, with the exception of a plate placed on the left shoulder. In a way, this plate acted as a shield, but it also handicapped the *retiarius*, because it prevented him from making certain movements. It is possible that the *retiarius* retained his tunic when he abandoned his mail armour, like the equestrian gladiator. One of the oldest images of the new *retiarius*, a bas-relief from Sepino in Italy (see Gilbert 2022: 32), shows a tunic worn *in exomis*, that is to say with one shoulder exposed, to make it easier for him to handle his net; but it might also be a *tunicatus* gladiator. Except for the *tunicati*, the *retiarii* were mostly shirtless.

With their distinctive weaponry, net and trident, the *retiarii* were the most easily recognizable gladiators. To the detriment of their protection, this relative lightness gave them greater flexibility and speed, offering an interesting advantage against more heavily armed adversaries. It is possible that a contest between two *retiarii* was attempted at the beginning, without convincing results; likewise against the *Gallus*. The *armatura*'s first real adversary was the *mirmillo* (Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Facts* I.8), but this pairing did not convince either, because

Dated to the 1st century AD, this oil-lamp medallion held at Lugdunum (Lyon, France) depicts a *retiarius*. (Author's photograph)







ABOVE LEFT
Held at the Museo d'Antichità 'J.J. Winckelmann' (Trieste, Italy), this artefact depicts a duel on a footbridge (*pons*) between the *retiarius* Kritos and the *secutor* Mariskos. (Author's drawing)

ABOVE RIGHT
Held at the Burdur Arkeoloji Müzesi and dating from the 3rd century AD, this is a curious depiction of a *retiarius* attacking a *secutor*, who is apparently seated. (N. Montacq-Velten)

the net grabbed the corners and crest of the *mirmillo*'s large helmet too easily. The fact that Suetonius (*Calig*. XXX.3) affirms that Caligula reduced the importance of the *mirmillo* – an *armatura* he did not like, preferring the *Thraex* – rather suggests that the *mirmillo* lost on this occasion one of his traditional adversaries.

The first Pompeian image of the *retiarius* is visible on the late reliefs of the mausoleum of Aulus Umbricius Scaurus, dated to around the middle of the 1st century AD. Two associated *retiarii* are depicted in a smaller size than other gladiators. Furthermore, they are the only ones not named, perhaps suggesting a lower status, or a subordinate function. We can assume that these were personnel responsible for lowly tasks, such as the killing of certain gladiators, or rather of condemned men. On a graffito, we see in particular a *retiarius* coming down from the platform where the *munerator* presides, to witness or control the killing of a *mirmillo*.

Let us add to the evidence skulls exhumed in the cemetery of the supposed gladiators of Ephesus (Turkey), which have perforations resembling trident impacts. The finishing blows during a duel were administered by the winner, when the opponent was still equipped and helmeted, and were normally struck towards the heart with a dagger, to shorten as much as possible the defeated gladiator's suffering and hasten his death. This is particularly visible on the Scaurus mausoleum, and on many other ancient sources. If these were indeed trident blows to the head, it surely means that these bodies are not those of gladiators, but of condemned men.

Two details taken from the hagiography of Perpetua and her servant Felicitas are interesting in this regard. The *retiarius* is clearly cited when finishing off those condemned *ad bestias* (those who had 'survived' the fangs of animals). There is still talk of a 'novice gladiator' who slit the martyr's throat with his sword, which is not contradictory, because the *retiarius* also had a short sword. These direct testimonies collected by Tertullian (*De spect*. XXV.4), evoke the 'sponge' of the *retiarii* to wipe away the blood of the condemned. The author, poorly informed about the technical language of the amphitheatre, is undoubtedly confused about this sponge and how it was used (see p.41), but the mention of the *retiarius* in this precise context is once again revealing.

After more than half a century of evolution, however, the *retiarius* finally found his perfect opponent in the *secutor*, who was a sort of improved *mirmillo*. That pairing thus constituted experienced growing popularity, especially during the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, as evidenced by numerous period images. Gladiators with nets and tridents sometimes took part in special performances, during which, perched on a platform equipped with footbridges (*pontes*), they faced several *secutores* trying to climb them. The protagonists then took the name *pontarii*. On such occasions, the *retiarius* apparently abandoned his net, using his trident and dagger but also heavy wooden or stone balls which he threw at his adversaries. We also know of two mysterious images in which the fight continues with a *secutor* sitting on a stool.

The *retiarii* and their *secutor* adversaries were the last gladiators. We almost only see them in the rare evidence that survives from the 4th century AD: the Villa Borghese mosaic; another from Cologne (Germany); and a splendid mosaic discovered in Libya, rendered with almost photographic realism.

The *sagittarius*

The very rare images of the *sagittarius* archer date from the 1st century BC. This does not mean that this gladiator disappeared under the Principate, however, because the Venosa inscription (*CIL* 9.465–66) still mentions him in the first half of the 1st century AD. This *armatura*'s longevity was

C

GLADIATORS, *C.*AD 70

(1) Referee

Undergoing minimal changes over time, the referees' clothing included a simple white tunic, very loose, cinched up above the belt, but falling below the knees. It was decorated with two vertical braids (*clavi*), which could be red, black or blue. This referee is wearing shoes with a flap on the instep, according to the fashion of the time, and holds a long flexible wand (*rudis*) to make the gladiators obey him, castigating them if necessary.

(2) *Hoplomachus*

He wears a helmet of the so-called Pompeii model, found in the gladiator school of that city. The grilles allow him to see and breathe better. It is decorated with a scene of victory over imprisoned barbarians. As is often the case, the ostrich-feather crest is white. Large red feathers are added to the sides, as shown in a painted glass from the Musée Guimet (Paris). We also see greaves with plating of different metals, as also on the Zliten mosaic. These greaves come from Pompeii. Underneath there are white pants with colourful dots. This detail is visible in a painting from Pompeii. The painting also shows a wide embroidered band which protrudes above the belt (fragments of which come from Pompeii). The decoration of the white gaiters is inspired by the Zliten mosaic. The shield is entirely made of brass. By this date, the top of the cuff had a shoulder piece, also decorated, after a statuette from the Campana collection (Rome, Italy).

(3) *Thraex*

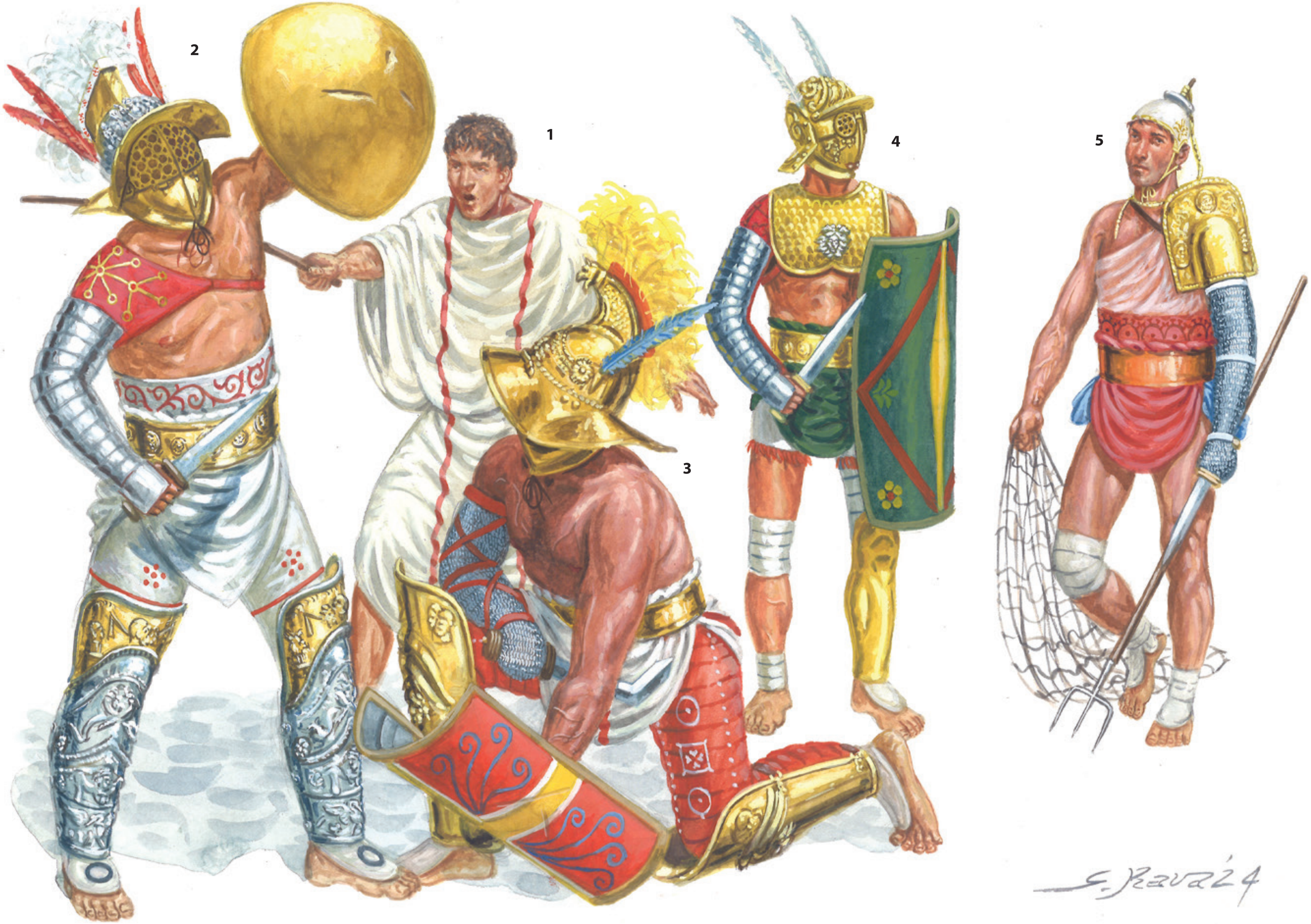
Offered to Napoleon Bonaparte, the elegant *Thraex* helmet worn by this gladiator was found in Pompeii and is kept today at the Musée du Louvre (Paris, France). A yellow mane has been added, as shown in the fresco in the Priscus tomb (see p.40). The feathers are planted in a wooden support that fits the crest, then fixed with pins. On this fresco, we also see the decoration of the loincloth, as well as that of the red pants. His greaves are also based on those found in Pompeii. The sword (*sica*) is more angular. The mail armband is extended by a glove, the whole assembly being held together by leather strips. The decoration of the square shield copies a detail from the Scaurus mausoleum in Pompeii.

(4) *Provocator*

This gladiator is reproduced essentially according to the large relief found in Pompeii, near the Stabian Gate and now at the Museo archeologico nazionale di Napoli (see p.44). His crestless helmet is a special model that appeared in the second quarter of the 1st century AD. Secured with crossed straps at the back, his pectoral is stamped metal, simulating rows of scales; the Gorgon head is intended to 'petrify' opponents. The fringed 'shorts', worn under his loincloth, are visible on the relief, as is the shield motif. The distinctive greave is also based on evidence from Pompeii.

(5) *Retiarius*

This extraordinary *retiarius* illustrates a famous anecdote. Gracchus, a priest of noble birth, became a gladiator and caused a great scandal, because he still wore his priestly mitre (*galerus*), and also because his diaphanous tunic (worn here with one shoulder exposed) demonstrated his status of *tunicatus*. The cord from the tip of the cap is untied and tied to his neck. The *galerus* is therefore his cap, and not his shoulder protection, which is reproduced from an artefact from Pompeii (see p.45). His two-tone loincloth and abdominal belt are inspired by a painting of the podium of the Pompeii amphitheatre.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undoubtedly greater than the sources suggest, but it was a minor *armatura*, which did not interest many spectators.

We know nothing of the *sagittarius*' possible evolutions, but we can doubt that he wore a full helmet, thus reducing his vision, which would have been detrimental to a gladiator who fought from afar. The *sagittarius*' armament was a dangerous weapon for the viewing public, because an arrow loosed from a bow could easily hit a spectator in a space as small as that of an amphitheatre. This possibility also explains, no doubt, why duels between *sagittarii* were rare.

The *andabata/trincus*

We also discussed at length the *andabatae*, of Gallic origin, in the earlier study. According to the Italica table, such participants in the *ludus* seem still to have existed at the end of the 2nd century AD, under the name of *trinci*. We cannot sincerely refer to them as true 'gladiators', however, because they were inmates condemned to death who agreed to be blinded and participate in a mortal combat which, unlike an execution, gave them a chance to win and survive. In fact, they were not trained in the profession of arms in a *ludus*. They fought among themselves with a sword in one hand, and a bell in the other hand to signal their position to their opponent. We have no confirmed representation of an *andabata/trincus* for this period.

The *veles*

The *veles* was one of the 'new' *armaturae* for which there is evidence during the Principate. We know almost nothing about this gladiator, except that he enjoyed a certain popularity according to Isidore of Seville (*Etymologiae* XVIII.53). The Roman Army always used the services of lightly equipped infantrymen, armed with several javelins. These 'skirmishers', spread across the front of the battle formation, launched their projectiles to kill as many of the enemy as possible and disorganize them, before the two sides' heavy infantry came to blows.

These fighters at range – essential on the battlefield – are never visible in ancient images, however, except on a fresco from the first half of the 2nd century AD, found at the villa of Liégeaud (La Croisille-sur-Briance, France). The inscription '*SPECTACULA*'unequivocally links the scene to a *munus*. On a plinth, gladiators, who look very much like *equites*, are dressed in short-sleeved tunics and are armed with javelins and small flat, oval shields. Some wear green tunics, others red, suggesting two very distinct teams. Experiments conducted by re-enactors revealed that this duel between two individuals lacked interest, but that they became much more spectacular between two teams of 2–3 *velites* each.

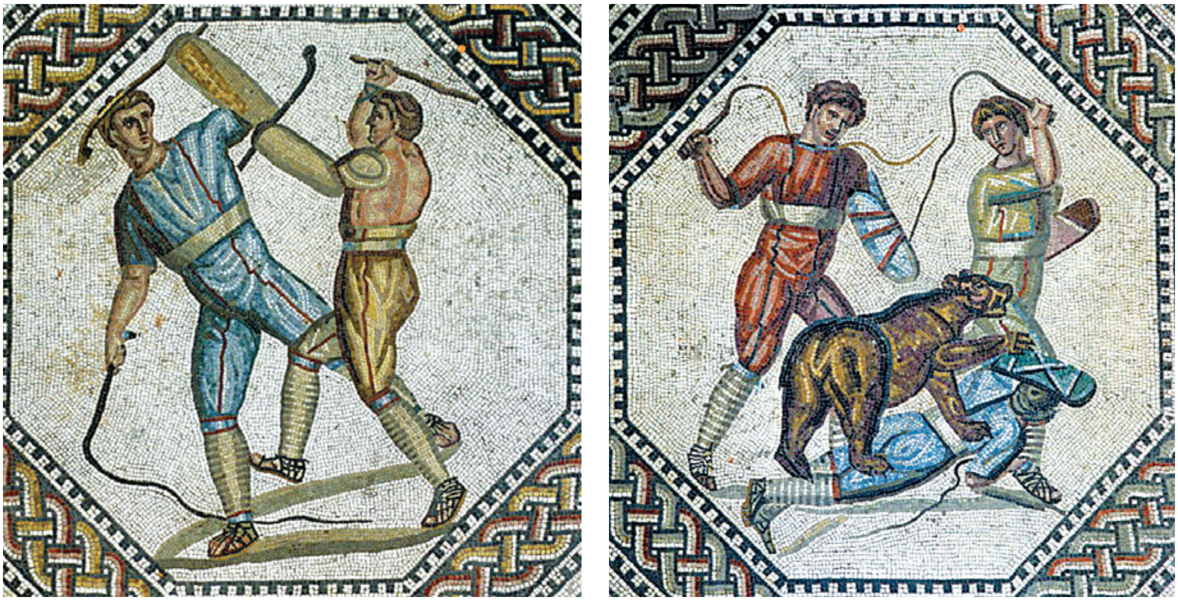
These gladiators appear to be wearing crested helmets, without visors, which is understandable as they fought at a distance. They did not need to throw their javelins far, but accuracy was critically important. Knowing how to throw a javelin is quite an art, and we know of a *doctor velitum*, that is to say an instructor specialized in this *armatura*. The other qualities required were undoubtedly the same as those required of the *sagittarii*: flexibility, liveliness and the ability to anticipate and dodge the opposing sides' attacks. It is also probable that the *veles*' way of fighting had similarities with that of archers: probably a single handful of 3–4 javelins, nothing more, except a shield to parry the opponent's blows. This is how they are depicted in Campanian paintings from the 4th century BC.

The *paegnarius*

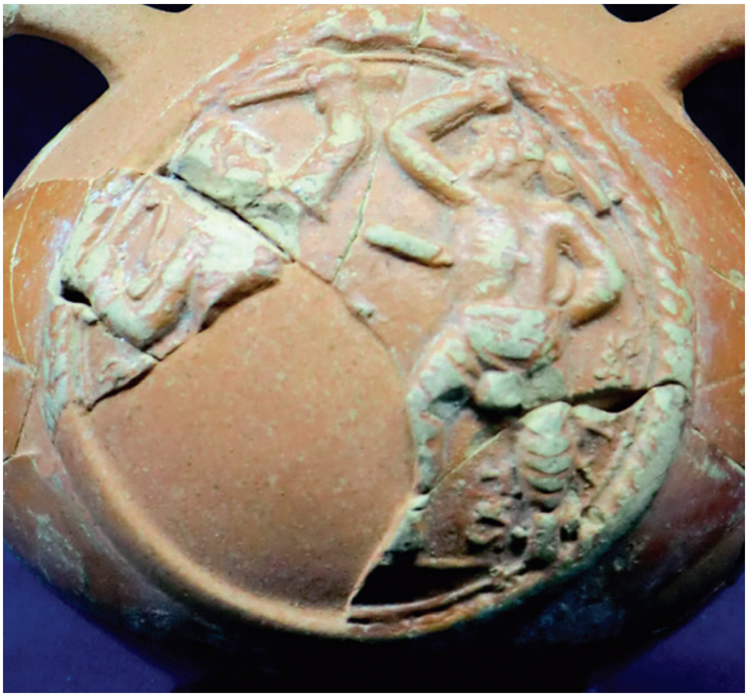
Suetonius was the first to mention this *armatura*, in his biography of Caligula (*Calig*. XXVI). It describes the antics organized by the emperor, which featured exhausted beasts, old gladiators and *paegnarii* chosen from among the fathers of families with some deformities. This testimony does not mean that this speciality emerged during the reign of Caligula, however; it may have existed previously. The *paegnarius*' status is ambiguous, because given the nature of the type's weaponry, we would be tempted not to consider him as a real gladiator. Indeed, when the first *paegnarius* struck with a whip, the second responded with a stick (*fustis*). Such blows are reminiscent of punishments reserved for slaves, hence the dishonour of receiving them.

Paegnarii were real gladiators, however. A certain *paegnarius* named Aprilis appears in the list of a college of gladiators (*CIL* 6.466), but in the last decuries (a grouping of ten men), which is proof that his position was considered inferior. These men were housed and trained at the *ludus Magnus* in Rome, and not at the *ludus matutinus*, which would make them auxiliaries of the hunts. From the beginning, however, they were there to handle the animals presented in the amphitheatre, to lead them towards real hunters, or towards those condemned *ad bestias* to be executed. We do not know the genesis of this *armatura*, but we can imagine that during a hunt (*venatio*), two auxiliaries one day quarreled and fought in the middle of the arena, to settle a dispute. This incident would have pleased and encouraged the organizers to formalize this type of fight, perhaps offered between two massacres to 'lighten the atmosphere'. Any other rational explanation escapes our understanding, because this creation was not justified *a priori* by any historical or technical argument.

The first image we have of the *paegnarii* is a relief made for a magistrate from the city of Amiternum (Abruzzo, Italy), which can be dated to the 1st century AD. Two men wrestle, bare-chested and dressed in simple loincloths. Each wears an open helmet, probably made of leather, with



These details from a mosaic from Nennig (Germany) depict (left) a duel between two *paegnarii* and (right) three *paegnarii* confronting a bear. (Author's photographs)



Dating from the 2nd or 3rd century AD and held at Lugdunum, this appliqué medallion depicts the clash of two *paegnarii*. (Author's photograph)

a thick peripheral rim to cushion blows to the head. Two other figures, of smaller size, seem to intervene. Each has a staff shaped like a crozier (*pedum*). As with the *retiarius*, the left arm is protected by a *manica* that encompasses the shoulder. The upper part of the *manica* seems to be rigid and of one piece, because it had to be able to protect the arm against blows received.

Such equipment can also be seen quite clearly on an oil lamp from the 2nd century BC. By the time this lamp was decorated, a change had taken place, because the man with the stick is now shirtless, while his opponent has retained his tunic. Subsequent images allow us to complete this first overview, the most beautiful and most famous of which is a mosaic panel from Nennig (Germany). The use of the *paegnarius*' weapons is very clear here: the curved stick is used to ward off the whip-blows of one of the gladiators (it is no longer a rope this time), and the straight-stick blows of his opponent. Note that by the beginning of the 3rd century AD, the clothing had changed. If the man with the whip is dressed in a sort of tight-fitting and colourful jumpsuit, his opponent remains bare-chested, which must make him more vulnerable to his opponent's whip. The cuff had also changed, because in the Nennig mosaic it is the forearm which is wrapped in a thick, heavily padded tubular sleeve (like those used by dog-trainers today), which leaves the hand free to grasp a weapon.

The tight-fitting suit of the *laqueator* – a name known from a single occurrence in Isidore of Seville (*Origins* XVIII.56) – or *lorarius* ('the whipper') is worn by numerous characters depicted in different finds, notably the very beautiful mosaic depictions displayed at the Museum Römerhalle, and that of Vallon (Switzerland), with a plethora of colours and decorative patterns. The clothing fashion of the *paegnarii* seems to have been different in the East, however. The Nennig mosaic shows two other *paegnarii* in red and yellow suits; they are flogging a modest-sized bear that is in the process of defeating one of their colleagues, who wears a blue suit. This exceptional mosaic therefore offers us a simultaneous vision of the functions of the *paegnarii*, both against animals and against other men.

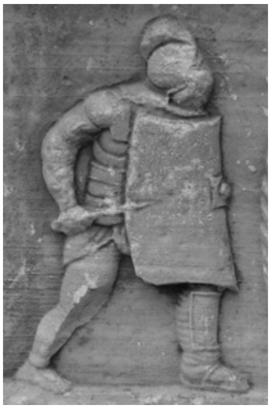
A relief from the antiquarium of Veleia (Parma, Italy) shows a hunter (*venator*) from the 2nd century AD with the whip and a spear fitted with a notched iron point. This same spear is sculpted on another stele in the antiquarium, suggesting that its exceptional size might mean it was not so much a weapon, but rather a sign of *familia gladiatoria* (or *venatoria*).

The *secutor*

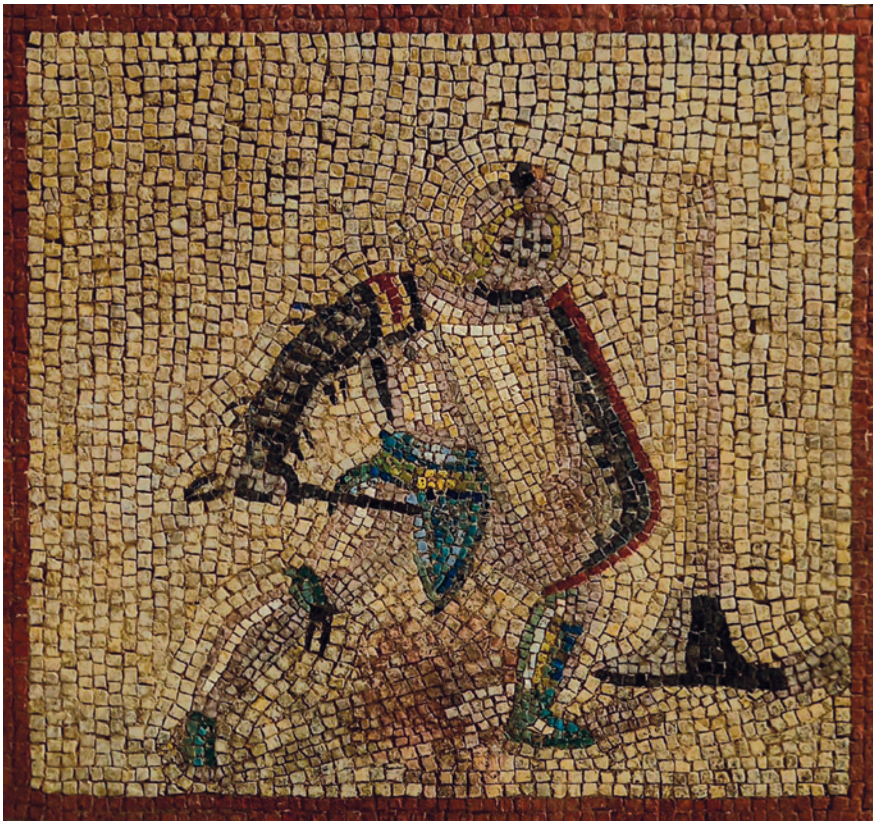
Once again, Suetonius is the first author to mention this gladiator, in his biography of Caligula (*Calig.* XXX). This appearance is therefore contemporary with the disappearance of the *mirmillo* as an adversary of the *retiarius*. Perfectly identified by the stele of the *secutor* Urbicus at the Antiquarium Alda Levi (Milan, Italy), this *armatura* has great similarities with the *mirmillo*. The *secutor*'s equipment – straight sword, large rectangular, curved shield, armband, small greave on the left leg – is in fact similar in every way, except for the shape of the helmet, clearly recognizable on the relief. The *secutor*'s helmet is simpler, without a collar around the crown and with a minimum of rough edges so as not to snag the trident and the net of the *retiarius*, who was the *secutor*'s only adversary. The plumed crest of the *mirmillo*'s helmet has given way to a metal half-moon crest, which no longer offers any grip for the *retiarius*' net.

As a result, the *retiarius*–*secutor* duel turned out to be more balanced and therefore more interesting for the public – but the tactics suffered. Unlike the *mirmillo*, typically on the defensive, the *secutor* (lit. 'pursuer') became a very offensive gladiator (Isidore of Seville, *Origins* XVIII.55). It must be said that the *secutor* did not have much choice if he wished to deprive the *retiarius* of the advantage given to him by a long weapon that kept his opponent at a distance.

The late appearance of the *secutor* explains why there is little evidence of this *armatura* in Pompeii, destroyed a few decades later in AD 79, apart from the helmets exhumed in the gladiator school. The *secutor*'s success was overwhelming, however, and he therefore became the most popular gladiator

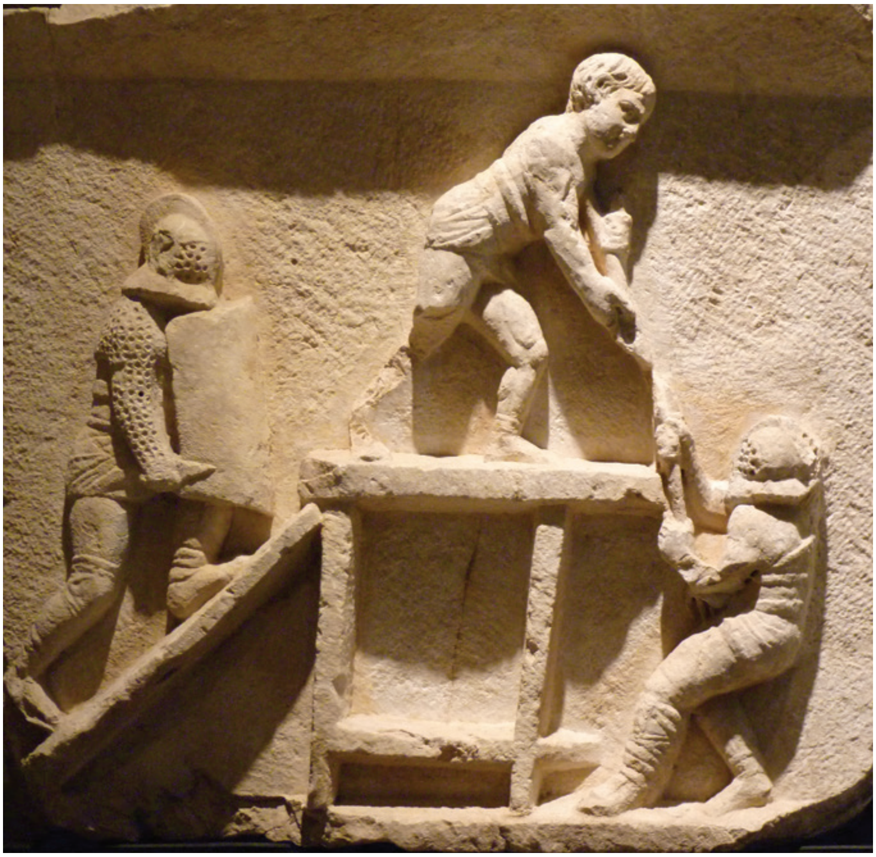


This stele at the Ephesus Arkeoloji Müzesi (Selçuk, Turkey) depicts a *secutor*. (J.-M. Buscail)



Held at the Musée des Ursulines (Mâcon, France) and dating from the 2nd or 3rd century AD, this mosaic depicts a *secutor* practising fencing against the stake (*palus*). (Author's photograph)

This carving from the Burdur Arkeoloji Müzesi depicts a *retiarius* and two *secutores* in combat on an overhanging footbridge (*pons*). (N. Montacq-Velten)



in his duel with the *retiarius*, until the end of the Principate. The images that represent him are therefore very numerous. The best-known of the *secutores* was none other than the emperor Commodus. The duel between *secutor* and *retiarius* was practised alone or in groups, sometimes on wooden bridges, which was a particularly perilous exercise.

D

GLADIATORS, *C.*AD 100–150

(1) *Essedarius*, *c.*AD 100

The *essedarii* also used the *provocator* helmet, which is confirmed by several iconographic sources. This one is copied from a surviving example from Pompeii (see p.54). The brass *manica* is extended by a leather shell on the shoulder. The legs, however, are protected only by strips of fabric. The decoration of the shield is visible on the Zliten mosaic. His sword lacks a point: gladiators were permitted to strike only with the sword's edges. The loincloth is longer, more often coloured than before, with fringes. The embroidery on the abdominal belt comes from a painting from Pompeii.

(2) *Scissor*, *c.*AD 100

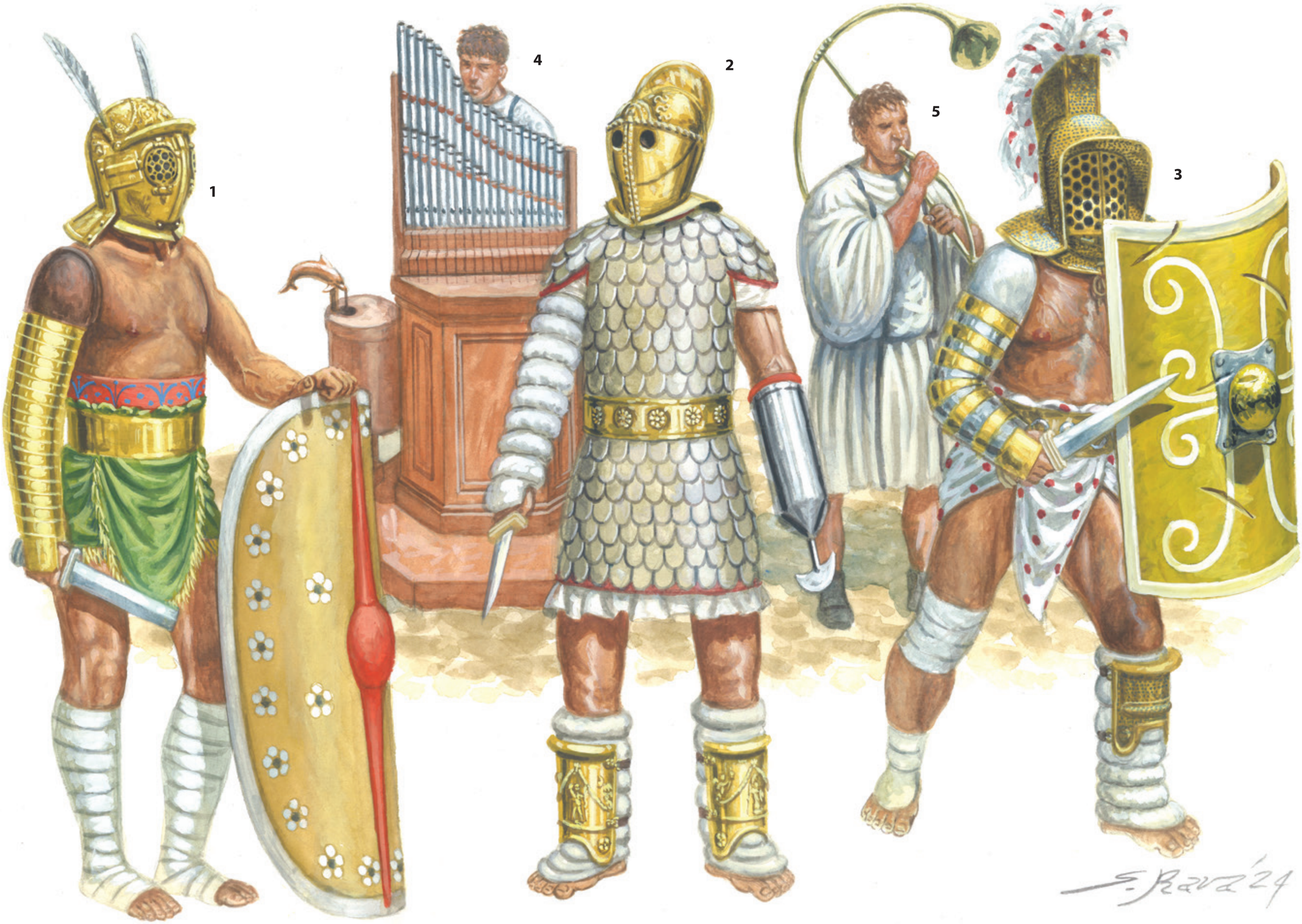
Opposed to the *retiarius*, the *scissor* logically uses the special helmet of the *secutor*; this one comes from Pompeii. Large ivory scales were also discovered in Pompeii; here, they have been used to make a breastplate, which also covers the shoulders. The *scissores* certainly used the *lorica squamata*. On his right arm he wears a padded *manica*, while on his left he has a special armband, finished with a sharpened crescent-shaped blade. Worn over padded gaiters, the two small greaves are based on those found in Pompeii. One is decorated with Minerva, the other with a gladiator brandishing a palm of victory.

(3) *Mirmillo*, *c.*AD 150

This *mirmillo* is distinguished by his Berlin helmet, reproduced after an artefact from the Neues Museum (Berlin, Germany). The helmet is taller than previous types, and the grille covers the entire face; a hollow crest has been added. The short greave, preserved with the helmet, is decorated with the same engraved grid. It is positioned higher on the shin, over a padded gaiter. The loincloth is pointed at the front; its red decoration, and that of the crest, is visible on the Zliten mosaic. At the back, the belt is fastened with studded leather straps. The *scutum* is plated in shiny brass.

(4 & 5) Musicians

Fights were accompanied by music. Here we see one musician playing a hydraulic organ and another playing a *cornu*, a sort of large hunting horn (two were found in Pompeii). Each musician is dressed in a large white tunic with two decorative black bands, and a pair of closed shoes.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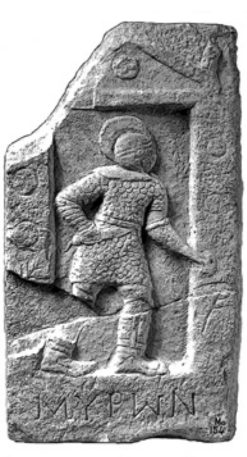
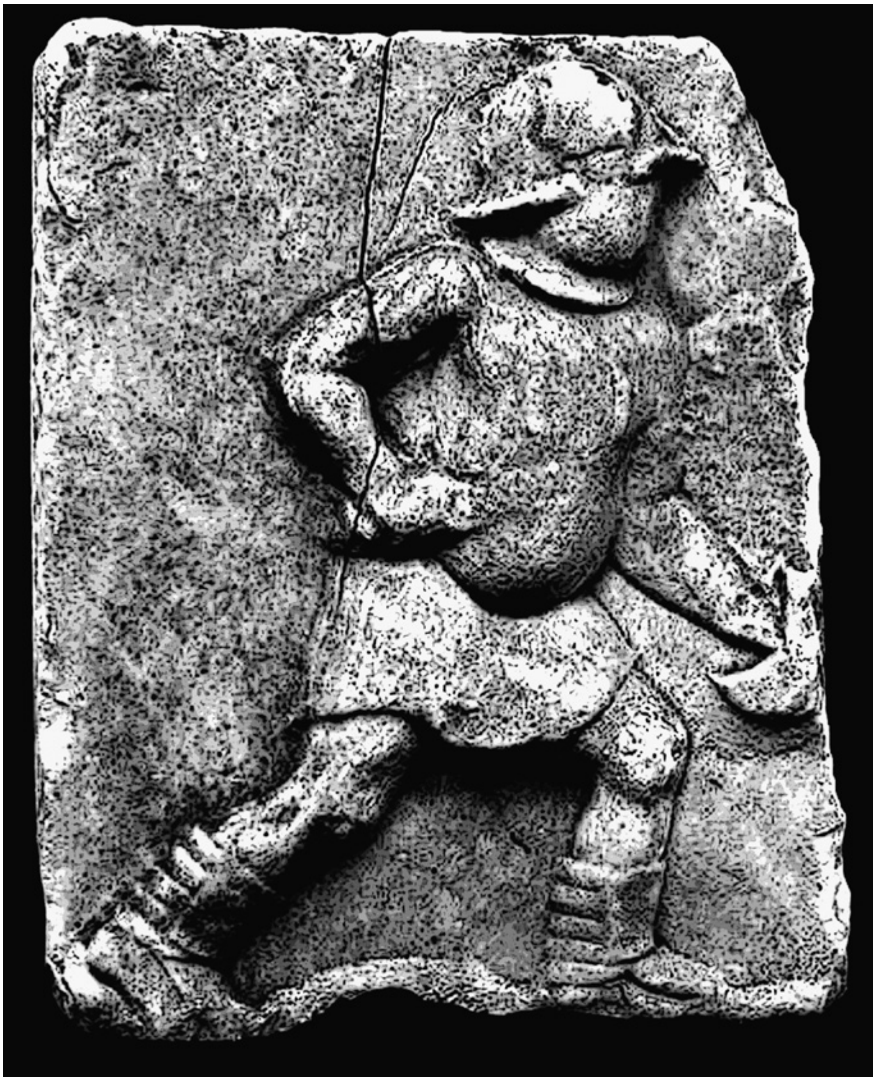


This stele depicting a *scissor* is held at the Musée du Louvre (Paris, France). (Author's drawing)

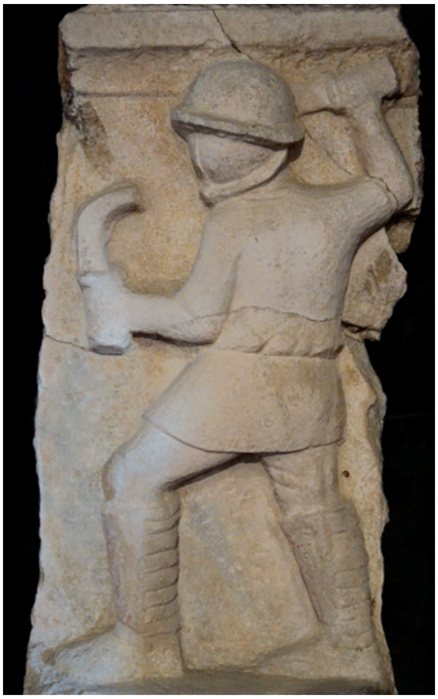
The *scissor/arbelas*

An inscription from Pompeii (*CIL* 9.466), and the list from Venosa mentioning a *scissor* called Caius Clodius, prove that in this instance we are dealing with a real *armatura*, which appears at least in the first half of the 1st century AD. The word *scissor* means 'slicer', which raises questions about this type's range and technique. Several bas-reliefs, particularly those held at the Musée du Louvre (Paris, France) and Tomis (present-day Constanța, Romania), help us answer these questions. The latter bas-relief depicts the *scissor* in combat against the *retiarius*. We therefore understand why he is wearing the typical *secutor* helmet, which offered protection against the trident and the net. On these two monuments, the *scissor* is heavily equipped, with a mail or scale armour reaching down to his knees, an armband on his right arm and two small greaves on his legs, like those worn by *secutores* or *mirmillones*. This copious body protection is explained by the absence of a shield. The *scissor* has in fact his left hand held in a metal sleeve, ending in a sharp iron crescent, as can still be seen on the stele of the *scissor* Honesimus, at the Arheološki Muzej U Splitu (Croatia).



This stele from Bodrum (Turkey) depicts a *scissor/arbelas* with the sharp sleeve on the left hand. (Author's drawing)

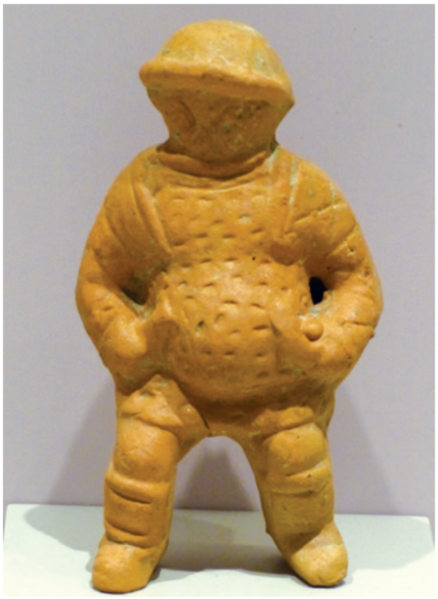
Thus, while he fences with a short sword in his right hand, with his left hand he tries to cut through the meshes of the net. Perhaps the *scissor* also used this dangerous cleaver to injure the *retiarius* when the opportunity presented itself. The sleeve could easily be released to grip and immobilize the trident's shaft. The identification of the *scissor* with the gladiator visible in these figures is not confirmed by any inscription, but it is certain.



This stele from the Hierapolis Arkeoloji Müzesi depicts a *dimachaerus*. (N. Montacq-Velten)

This singular gladiator is also called *arbelas*. This word designates the shoemaker's semicircular blade, which has an identical crescent-moon shape. This name seems to have been adopted in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, when the *scissor* disappeared from Western arenas, while continuing to enjoy a strong reputation in the East. In the 3rd or 4th century AD, the *scissor/arbelas* still appears on a bas-relief at the Hierapolis Arkeoloji Müzesi. His equipment is almost unchanged. On the other hand, we are no longer very sure of seeing mail or scale armour on him. This observation can be confirmed by two other finds: an oil lamp from Cnidus (Greece), on which the *scissor* is represented with a pleated or vertically striped tunic (one can also imagine a sort of quilted jacket); and a relief from Bodrum (formerly Halicarnassus, Turkey) that shows a simple tunic, but which again seems padded, because the man has such a prominent stomach. His helmet has lost its crest, and has a large peripheral collar. On these last two stelae, the fighters no longer have the traditional *manica* on their right arm, which, with the loss of the armour, leads us to think that the injuries sustained by such gladiators must have been more numerous and serious. This is an additional clue to add to the record of the growing brutality of *gladiatura* during its decline. At this time, his adversary is no longer only the *retiarius*. On the Hierapolis Arkeoloji Müzesi stele, the *scissor/arbelas* fights a gladiator equipped in much the same way, but who holds a curved sword instead of a half-moon blade. It is therefore another type of gladiator, the *dimachaerus*.

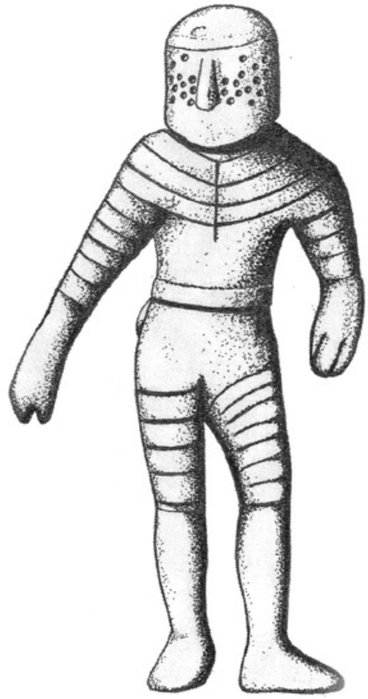
Held at the Ephesus Arkeoloji Müzesi and dating from the 3rd or 4th century AD, this clay statuette depicts a *dimachaerus*. (N. Montacq-Velten)



The *dimachaerus*

The etymology of this name suggests that this gladiator fought with two 'machetes', one in each hand. Two references make us aware of the *dimachaerus*: a passage from Artemidorus (II.32) and an inscription from Lyon (*CIL* 13.1997). The latter presents us with a gladiator named Hylas, who in his time was an *essedarius* and/or *dimachaerus* (it sometimes happened that the same man had more than one speciality). Many theories have been formulated, but we must follow the simplest, which identifies the adversary of the late *scissor/arbelas* with our *dimachaerus*. On the Hierapolis Arkeoloji Müzesi reliefs, this gladiator is armed with a sword in each hand: a straight one in the right hand, and a sword curved into a sickle in the left hand. This sickle could be reminiscent of a late version of the *sica* used by the *Thraex*, but the gladiator depicted does not have any of the other attributes of this *armatura*.

The *cruppelarius*



This statuette of a *crupellarius* was found in Versigny (France). (Author's drawing)

To conclude this inventory, let us address the *cruppelarius*. Here, it is not a question of setting out what we know about this fighter, but of explaining why we think that he was not a gladiator. The *cruppelarius* is known only from Tacitus' narration of the Gallic revolt of AD 21. During the reign of the emperor Tiberius (r. AD 14–37), Gallic notables attempted to shake off the Roman yoke, and recruited a motley army to face the legions that moved from Germania to defeat them. In Autun (France), the Gallic leaders recruited slaves intended for the profession of 'gladiators', called in that country *cruppelarii*. Tacitus tells us that 'iron armour covers them entirely and makes them impenetrable to blows, although it hinders them from striking themselves' (*Ann*. III.43). According to this account, the legionaries found their weapons to be ineffective and instead used picks and levers to fell the *cruppelarii* like trees. Prevented from getting up by the weight of their armour, the *cruppelarii* were defeated. We can perhaps get an idea of this particular equipment thanks to a statuette found in Versigny (France). The man is clad in iron and wears a very medieval-looking helmet. We do not know what weapons he would have used.

What would have been the point of such a heavily armoured and indestructible gladiator? At this time the trend was towards a significant reduction in all gladiator equipment. If the *cruppelarius* had been pitted against a gladiator wearing the same armour, the fight would have been practically inconclusive – and a duel that dragged on was not likely to please the public. If, on the other hand, the *cruppelarius* faced a more lightly equipped gladiator, then the imbalance could only be compensated for if the *cruppelarius* presented a handicap, the nature and reality of which we do not know. Moreover, a man who knew he was invulnerable should not have feared for his life, in the manner of the other *armaturae*.

We think that the *cruppelarius* could have faced wild beasts or bears during the *venationes* of Gaul, armed with few weapons or none at all, which would explain the type's impressively substantial bodily protection. As Tacitus writes (*Annales* III.43), the *cruppelarius*' armour reduced his mobility. Against agile and fast beasts, this type's very heaviness could promote interest in this confrontation. For Tacitus, poorly informed of this Gallic originality, the term 'gladiator' to designate the *cruppelarius* is undoubtedly an error.

This hypothesis finds justification in ivory diptychs from the Dominate, illustrated with hunting scenes, on which we repeatedly see men clad in iron opposed to wild beasts, notably with a coat of mail and a helmet similar to those depicted on the Versigny statuette. Two notable examples held in Paris are the diptych of Areobindus (consul in 506) at the Musée de Cluny and that of Anastasius (consul in 517) at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. This type of hunting aid was essential to the proper functioning of the spectacle, and it is therefore not rare to observe them in the ancient images. Ceramic shards from the Thermenmuseum (Heerlen, Netherlands) show huddled human figures in heavy, quilted costumes. Their numbers and small size suggest their inferior status to true fighters and hunters, which distinguishes them in particular from the *paegnarii* who stand alongside them.

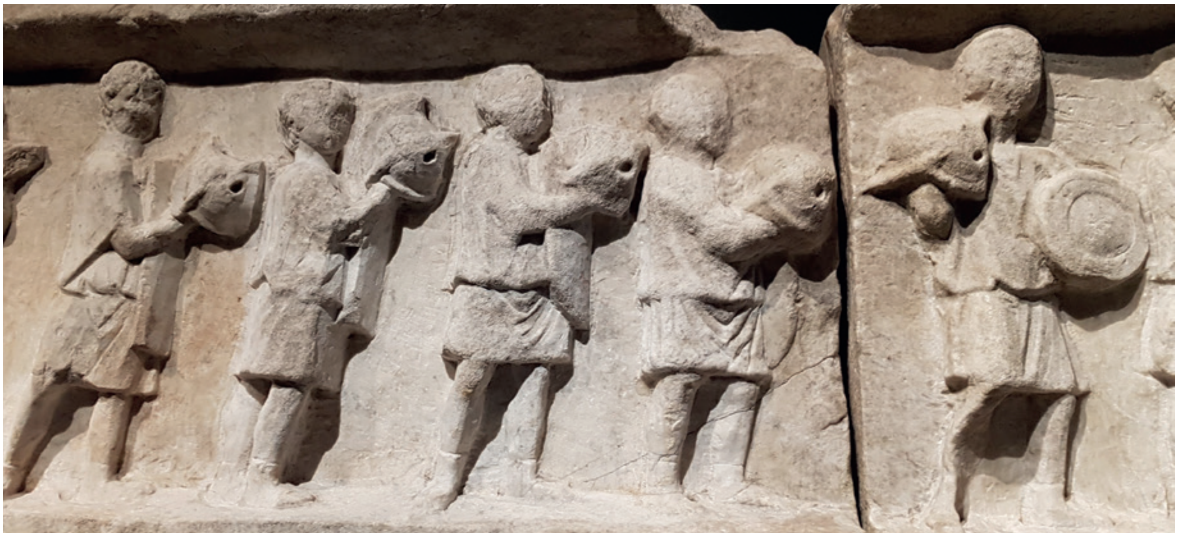
GLADIATOR GEAR

From the 1st century BC, the equipment of gladiators was regulated, and this standardization increased during the following four centuries. 'Standardization' does not mean 'uniformity', however. If the weaponry of gladiators necessarily followed established patterns, there could be variations in the colours of clothing, in the decoration of shields and armour, and to a lesser extent also in the shapes of helmets. On the other hand, it is unthinkable that a gladiator would take the weapons of another *armatura*. The list of his defensive and offensive weapons remained unchanged, allowing spectators to identify at first glance what type of gladiator was entering the arena. Over time, however, some minor developments should be noted.

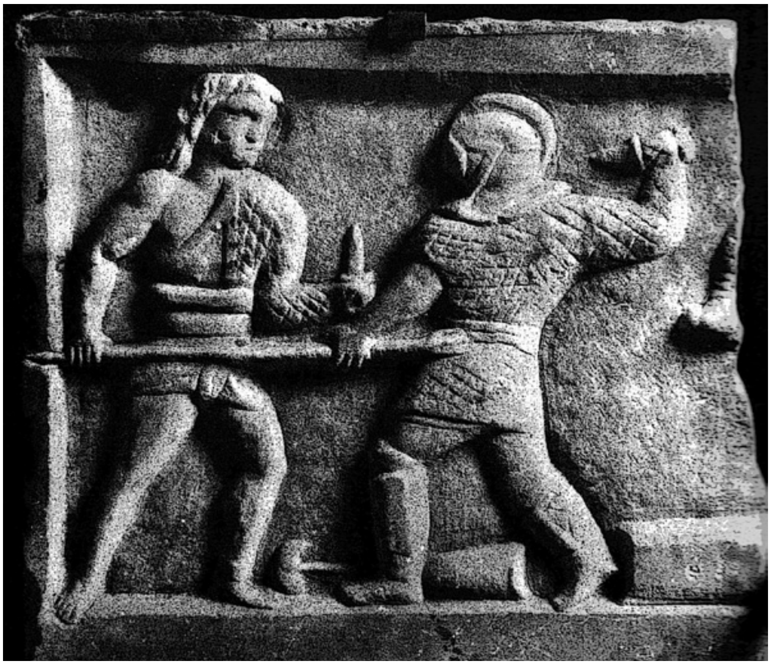
The Julio-Claudian (27 BC–AD 68) and Flavian (AD 69–96) periods are best documented by iconography, but especially by the archaeological discoveries in Pompeii, in 1766–67. Among the 50 artefacts exhumed there were 12 complete helmets and 14 greaves, but also some shoulder protections of *retiarii*, daggers and points of spears or javelins, as well as various fragments. This unique collection was sent to the Portici museum (Italy), then joined that of the museum in nearby Naples. In 1802, some pieces were offered as gifts to the First Consul Napoleon Bonaparte, which are today kept at the Musée du Louvre.

Several exceptional finds have since enriched our knowledge of gladiator equipment, but curiously, none from the East, which was a very active centre during the 2nd–4th centuries AD. Fortunately, we still have a quantity of monuments, steles, ceramics, decorated glass, paintings and mosaics, which allow this study. What emerges from this corpus is a remarkable coherence and unity of forms across the Empire, demonstrating the effectiveness of the regulations. We can easily follow the development of gladiator equipment that sought to improve, without renouncing aesthetics, but which little by little prioritized performance, abandoning beautiful decorations and adopting more massive forms.

After the assassination of the gladiator-emperor Commodus in AD 192, his short-lived successor Pertinax (r. January–March AD 193)



In this detail from the mausoleum of Cnaeus Clovatius in Pompeii (now held at the Museo archeologico nazionale di Napoli, Italy), the gladiators' gear is carried in a procession (*pompa*) by amphitheatre staff (*ministri*) before the fight commences. (G. Habasque) had Commodus' equipment adorned with precious stones sold at auction (*His. Aug. Perti.* VIII.3). Perhaps there even existed a sort of 'uniform' for the imperial gladiators, because Suetonius writes that Domitian allowed the people to ask for two gladiators from his school, who appeared 'in court costume' (*Dom.* IV). The equipment belonged to the *ludi*, and was then distributed to the students during their careers. It is in fact unthinkable that the gladiators would have received different equipment for each performance.



Dating from the 2nd–3rd centuries AD and now in a private collection, this bas-relief from Tomis (Romania) depicts a duel between a *retiarius* (left) and a *scissor*. (Author's drawing)

In many cases, Pompeian artefacts bear engraved initials, which are sometimes common to several pieces. These are probably not the initials of the gladiators, but more logically those of the *lanista* or the manufacturer. We read, for example, 'PMC', 'PCAR' or 'PC', 'CAR', 'ACE', and even 'NER AUG' to designate the school of Nero. Ten pieces bear the 'MCP' mark, although not always in complete form. These three letters are reminiscent of the three names (*trianomina*) that identified a Roman citizen. On a leg protector, we even discover two different stamps. Free gladiators or 'stars' must have owned items of their equipment, though, otherwise how can we explain that victorious men could offer their shield to a divinity? Horace mentions the case of a certain *rudiarius* Veianius, who, before retiring, hung his weapons on a pillar of the temple of Hercules (*Ep.* I.1.4–5). We can also imagine that they were replaced by miniature votive weapons, like the small bronze *retiarius* shoulder protection, leg protection or shield, found in Pompeii, suspended from a chain with a tabula marked with the name of a gladiator. The shape of the weapons, the loincloths, and the length of the armbands help us to date the ancient images.

E

GLADIATORS, AD 150–200

(1) *Secutor*, *c.*AD 150

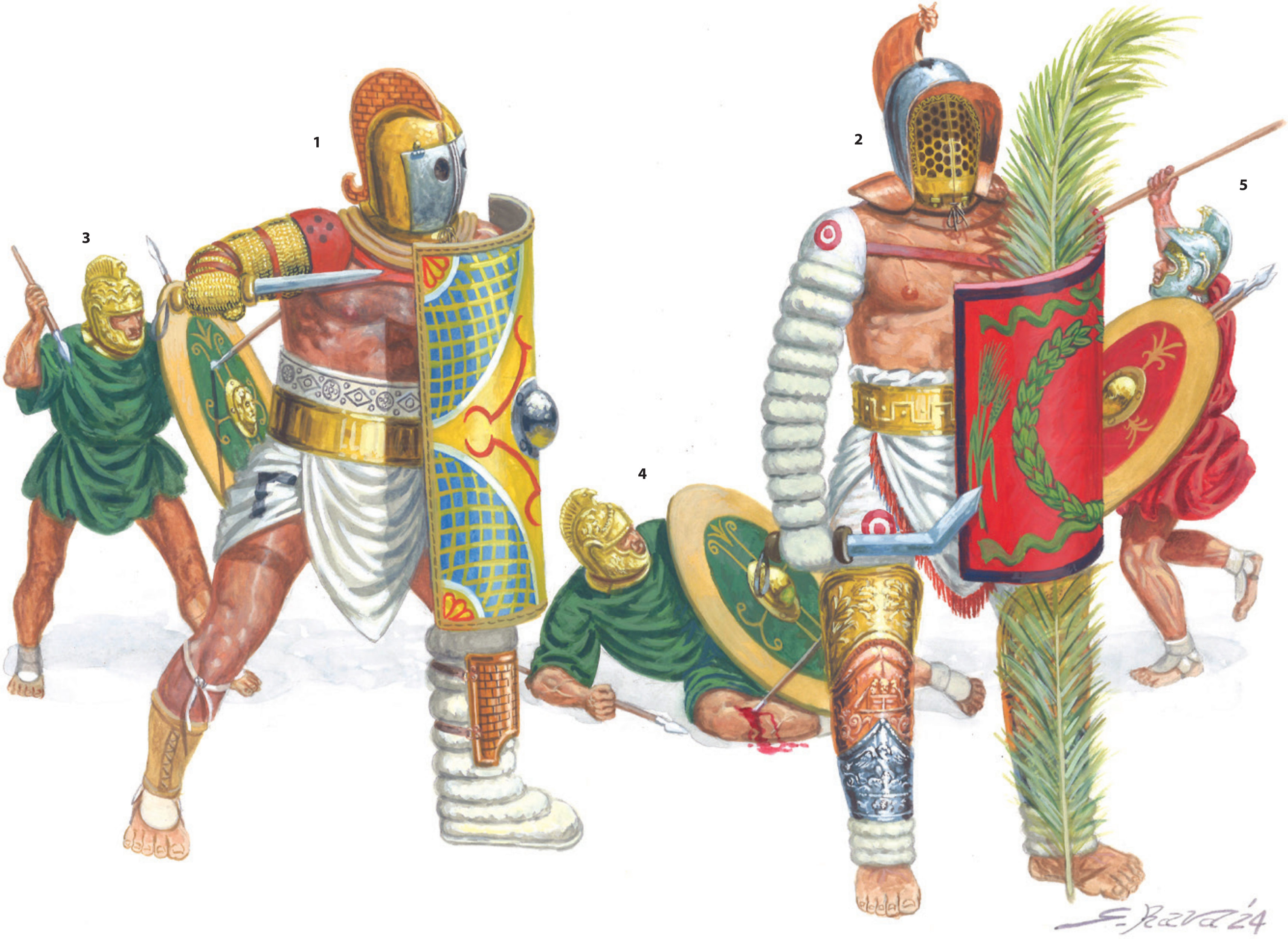
This *secutor* wears an evolved version of the previous Pompeian helmet, which is very frequently represented in ancient images. It fitted more tightly around the neck and had a wider gorget. We see the base of the hood protruding from under the helmet. The decoration of the loincloth, and the bronze *manica* held in place by straps, are copied from a mosaic in Verona (Italy; see p.10). The right leg is also protected by a leather gaiter.

(2) *Thraex*, *c.*AD 150

This *Thraex* is inspired by different depictions, notably the stele (now lost) of M. Antonius Exochus. Over a hood he wears a Berlin-type helmet, but with the specific crest of his armour, with the protome of a griffin. Its elements are made of red copper, as suggested by a mosaic from Reims (France). The decoration of the shield comes from the stele of Exochus. The greaves were discovered in Pompeii. A mosaic from Verona (see p.10) shows three different metal colours.

(3, 4 & 5) *Velites*, *c.*AD 150

A single fresco found in France illustrates a contest between *velites*, who fought in two teams, distinguished by tunics of different colours. Although pieces of known weaponry cannot be identified in the source, we can see that the helmet lacks a mask and has a crest with a pointed tip, and we imagine instead military helmets, re-used in small provincial amphitheatres. These are contemporary cavalry helmets. The shields are oval and flat, and the fighters use a handful of javelins each.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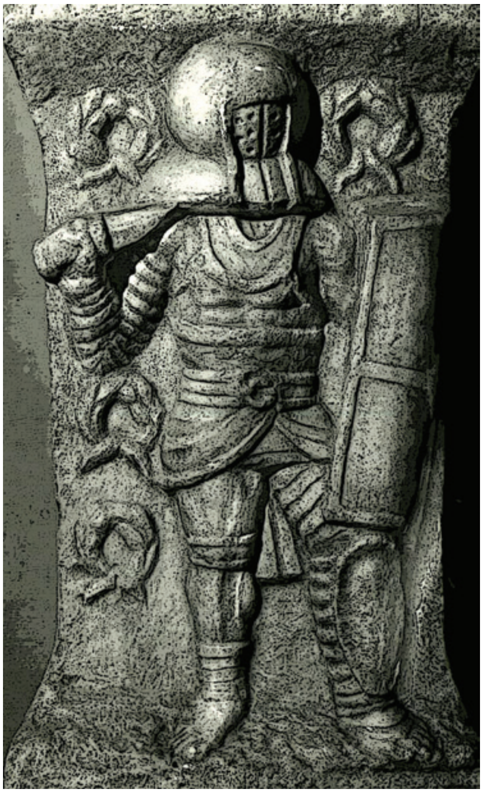
Clothing

At the beginning of the 1st century AD, the **loincloth** (*subligar* or *subligaculum*, *perizoma*) was close in form to those of the previous era. It was white, with the edges tucked under the belt at hip level, to form large rounded folds in front. The rear was no longer floating like before; it now hugged the individual's posterior, denoting a change in cut. This style was in use throughout the 1st century AD, and even beyond, and it is the one illustrated in the majority of Pompeian paintings, which exceptionally show red loincloths. The large strip of fabric placed under the belt, hanging down the front, still appears in some early images, but disappears during the reign of Augustus.

During the 2nd century AD, the sides of the loincloth were tight-fitting at the back and hips, but the front piece was now cut into a point. The fabric was sometimes bordered with fringes, as shown on the stele of the *Thraex* Exochus. Images from the 3rd century AD bear witness to a notable change in the shape of the loincloth, which no longer had the front panel serving as a cover-up. There was no longer any appearance (or only a slight one) of pleating, but the skirt was now widely indented at the front, revealing a sort of brief worn underneath. We can also wonder if the various models of loincloth from previous eras did not themselves cover something else.

This is more than likely in reality. Archaeological remains of such leather **underwear** have been discovered, and it is possible that some were made from fabric. A shard of a 3rd-century AD ceramic, found in Cambridgeshire (England), shows an unclothed man from behind, wearing only a sort of 'thong'. Although he carries a whip in his hands, he cannot have been a gladiator: at best, a *venatio laqueator*. A *paegnarius* depicted on a goblet found in Colchester (England) also wears such a 'thong', and nothing else. On the Villa Borghese mosaic, from the 4th century AD, two triumphant *retiarii*, Astacius and Iaculator, each brandish the *rudis*. They have laid down their equipment and weapons, and wear tight red underpants, held in place by a white belt. All of the other gladiators fighting alongside them, however, wear large white loincloths.

Dating from the 3rd century AD, this stele of a *provocator* from Ephesus (Turkey) is held at the Pergamonmuseum (Berlin, Germany). It reveals the style of loincloth worn at this time; note that the belt buckle is at the front. (Author's drawing)

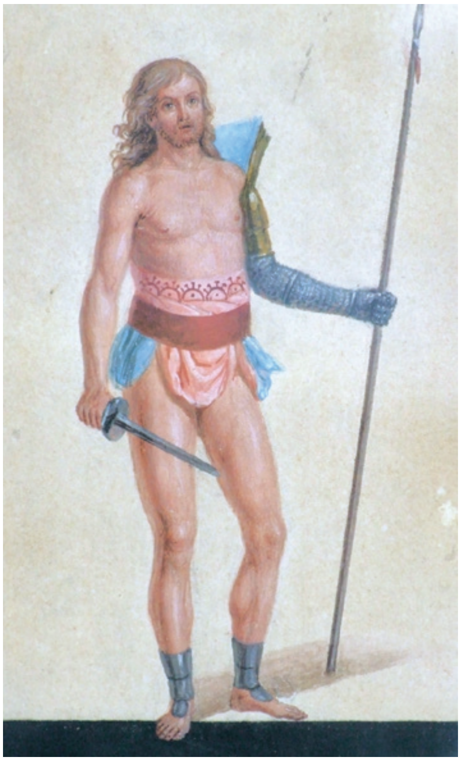


Thus, gladiators put on two distinct garments around their waists: briefs and skirts. The latter could take different forms depending on the era. In the 4th century AD, it seems that fashion returned to the 2nd-century AD style, with the skirt pointed at the front; at least, that is what the Villa Borghese mosaic shows. To finish, let us cite two original examples of underwear. The relief of the Stabian Gate in Pompeii notably presents a duel of *provocatores* who wear fringed shorts under the canvas skirt, and a *mirmillo* also, but without fringes this time. Another contemporary relief from Fiori (Albania) shows a *mirmillo* wearing the same style of shorts, but apparently quilted, with seams that draw a grid over their entire surface.

If the general fashion was for the colour white, we sometimes notice some flights of fancy. Painted on the podium wall of the Pompeii amphitheatre (see p.39), a *retiarius* is dressed in a sky-blue loincloth, but the front part of the fabric is pink. It is therefore possible that this loincloth was made of different pieces sewn together. This detail is corroborated by the Kourion mosaic illustrating a duel between *essedarii* (p.13). On the tomb of the aedile (magistrate) Vestorius Priscus, in Pompeii (see p.40), the loincloth of a *Thraex* is decorated with a vertical red line on the front. The Nennig mosaic presents a *secutor* viewed from behind, wearing a loincloth bordered with several red lines, and embroidered stars of the same colour. Juvenal writes of a *retiarius* tunic embroidered with gold (*Sat*. VIII.207). The edges of the fabric could sometimes be highlighted with a coloured edge, but on the gladiators in the Zliten mosaic, it is sometimes the entire loincloth that is coloured and edged in white. Other examples exist.

In the 3rd century AD, clothing fashion changed in its decoration. This change was accentuated in the following century, to follow the clothing fashion of the time, with a reinforcement of decoration in the form of *orbiculi* (a sort of large rosette, generally geometric). We see them on Egyptian coloured glass, and on a large mosaic found in Libya.

Under the Principate, the **tunic** was primarily worn by *equites*. It was mainly white at the beginning, but between the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, it became coloured, with *clavi* (vertical bands on each side of the neckline, or a single central band in the 4th century AD). This tunic was the remnant of the *equites*' old equipment, after they abandoned their scale armour. We can assume that this was also true for the later *Samnes*, after the loss of their armour. Was it the same for the *velites*, who appear dressed in a tunic on the Liégeaud fresco? This painting suggests that they competed in teams distinguished by the colour of their tunics, like present-day football shirts.



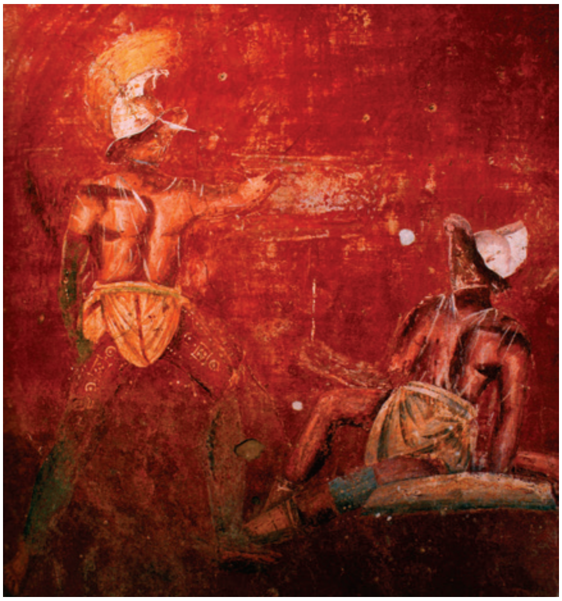
This copy of a painting in the amphitheatre in Pompeii depicts a *retiarius* from the mid-1st century AD. The painter misinterpreted the trident. (R. D'Amato)

Like all tunics of the time, the *eque*s' tunic was first of all a simple square or rectangle of wool, measuring about 1m on each side, and therefore without sleeves. It was raised high on the thighs to free the legs for riding a horse. It is possible that linen could also have been used. Short sleeves appeared later. The *scissor*, who wore armour, also had a tunic, just like his opponent, the *dimachaerus*. Both of these types of gladiator could wear a padded garment over the tunic.

From the 3rd century AD onwards, we see the *paegnarii* wearing tight-fitting monochrome or colourful jumpsuits. In reality, such costumes were made up of a sort of short- or long-sleeved 'T-shirt', tucked into short breeches (except the *paegnarius* who fought with a stick, who remained shirtless). These garments may have been made of leather, the better to resist the claws and fangs of wild animals. A wide abdominal belt, undoubtedly made of leather, covered the junction of the two garments.

The special garment worn by the *tunicati* seems to have been light, made of silk chiffon. The most beautiful image can be seen in the fresco of the Priscus tomb in Pompeii (see p.40). We often see them worn *in exomis*, releasing one shoulder through their wide neckline, in order to free the movement of the arm, in the manner of manual workers.

With a few exceptions, all gladiators wore a large bronze **belt** (*balteus*) around the waist, to fix their loincloth, but also to protect the abdomen.



Dating from the mid-1st century AD, this fresco from the tomb of Vestorius Priscus in Pompeii depicts a *Thraex* (left) and a *mirmillo tunicati*. We clearly see their transparent tunics, and the decoration of the loincloth and pants of the *Thraex*. (R. D'Amato)

This belt was inherited from the panoply of the *Samnes*, who formed the first *armatura*. It was a symbol of virility, and therefore perhaps forbidden to *tunicati*. In the discoveries from the gladiator school of Pompeii, several segments of *baltei* measuring 8–10cm wide could be identified, including a very complete one measuring 92cm in length. Remnants of leather were still visible. These belts are decorated with engraved lines, most often drawing volutes, but also with cabochons (shaped and polished gemstones) fixed at regular intervals, representing a maenad (a female follower of the Greek god Dionysus), Eros or a satyr, but also Diana and Mercury. While evidence from Pompeii shows such medallions to be round, reliefs show them in various shapes, including squares and diamonds. In documents from the 2nd century AD and beyond, we also discover belts made up of square or rectangular plates, undoubtedly riveted on a leather base, like military *cinguli*. The belts depicted on the Villa Borghese mosaic are very varied: they are always apparently in bronze (or brass), but they display colourful geometric patterns (chequerboards, facets, etc.) that were certainly enamelled.

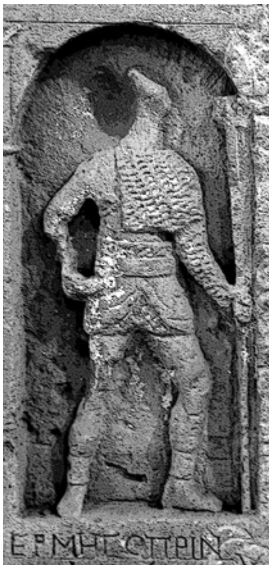
We also systematically observe two coloured leather borders sewn or riveted, to prevent the metal edges from injuring the gladiator. For a very long time, the closure was in the back. A loop is very detailed on the bas-relief of Fiano Romano at the Musée du Louvre. In the 3rd century AD, the closure was located more often in front. It was generally a crossed lace, but we also see a large metal or ivory ring, which was very common among the military. If the closure returned to the front of the body, it was also because the abdominal protection was reinforced at the same time. Whereas previously the top of the skirts or loincloths barely extended a few centimetres above the belts, barely covering the navel, now a wide canvas or leather belt was added, protecting the entire abdomen. Some documents show that these abdominal (or lumbar) belts could be richly decorated with *rinceaux* (a continuous wavy stem motif). A clay figure of a *secutor* held at the Museum of History and Civilizations (Rabat, Morocco) is exemplary, as is a *provocator* relief from the Afrodisias Müzesi, dated to the 2nd century AD, which offers great precision in detail: waves, twists and stairs, etc. These decorated canvases or leathers were undoubtedly brightly coloured.

From the beginning of the 1st century AD, gladiator *baltei* were equipped with weighted straps on the back. These were certainly the laces or straps used to tie the two ends of the belt, and which were left hanging over the buttocks. This way of doing things is similar to what was done, at the same time, among soldiers (but on the front as for them), and which gave rise to the famous *cingulum* with a studded apron: first a single strap hanging, then several, weighted with cabochons and a pendant at each end. This peculiarity of the gladiatorial *balteus* has gone completely unnoticed, although there are numerous representations, for example on the Cavillargues medallion at the Musée de la Romanité (Nîmes, France; see p.59). During the 2nd century AD, but more often in the following century, these dorsal aprons were simplified into a sort of square of reduced dimensions.

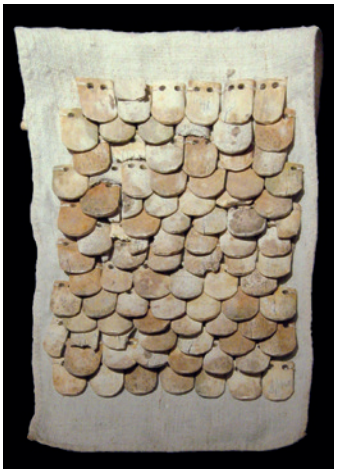
Body armour

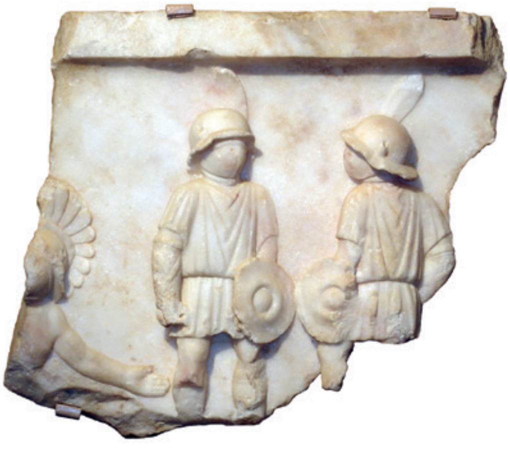
The *scissor/arbelas*, and his opponent the *dimachaerus*, were the last gladiators still equipped with armour. The bas-reliefs mainly show a scaled **breastplate**. Should we attribute to them the large bone scales found in the gladiator school of Pompeii? We do not see who else could have used them, other than perhaps a hunter. On a 3rd century AD relief from Tomis (see p.36), the *scissor* wears a coat of mail that reaches down to mid-thigh. The right sleeve is long, and includes a glove that covers the hand holding the dagger. On the left, however, the sleeve is short, to allow the *scissor* to put on the sharp sleeve. This image is unique, as the breastplate and armlet appear to be combined; elsewhere they are shown as being independent. At the end of the 3rd century AD and during the 4th century AD, the metal breastplate was replaced by a sort of gambeson. At the Manisa Arkeoloji Müzesi and the Istanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri (Turkey), two steles show these fighters covered in a tunic that seems to make them very plump, but is undoubtedly heavily padded in reality. A series of later images from Pamukkale show these two gladiator types wearing a simple tunic. This would correspond well to the context of the *gladiatura* of the 4th century AD, which was above all more deadly than previously.

Only the *provocator* wore the **pectoral**, also known as the *cardiophylax* ('heart protector') or *spongia* ('sponge'), because it had to 'absorb' blows, in particular those from the edge of the opponent's shield. It was a rectangular plate covering the chest, and sometimes even part of the abdomen during the 2nd century AD. It was concave in its upper part, to avoid any discomfort in the throat area, thus forming a sort of strap that went up over the trapezius. At the pectoral's ends were riveted leather straps which crossed and attached at the back. Weighted with a pendant in the shape of a *fleur-de-lis* or a triangle, they became longer, and eventually reached down to the knees, and even to the ground. In the 2nd century AD, the pectoral tended to become rounded at the bottom, a characteristic that evolved during the following century, giving it the shape of a crescent moon. We know of a stele from Bodrum that shows a circular pectoral. The pectoral was sometimes decorated with incised, stamped or attached motifs such as scales, Gorgon heads or flowers. The pectoral's edges were bordered with metal or leather to reduce the risk of injuring the wearer.



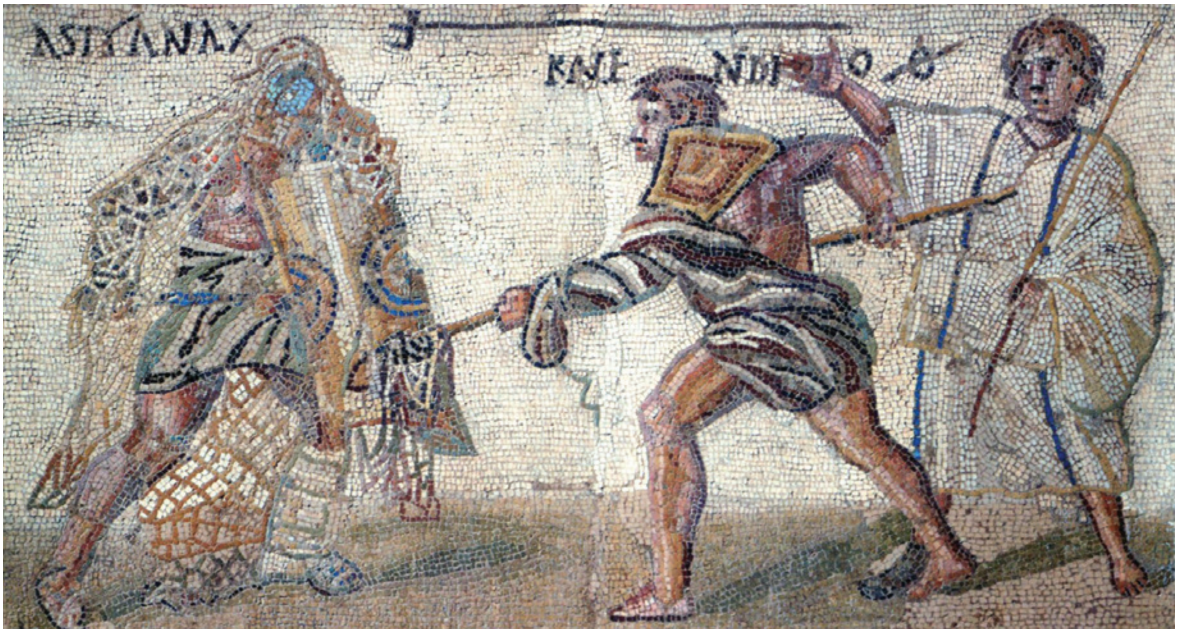
Held at the Tolmeita Museum (Ptolemais, Libya), this depiction of a *retiarius* named Hermes shows a mail *manica* covering much of the chest, making it unnecessary for the wearer to add a metal shoulder pad. (Author's drawing)





FAR LEFT
Held at the Museo archeologico nazionale di Napoli, these large ivory scales are perhaps from *scissor* armour. (R. D'Amato)

LEFT
Dating from the 1st century AD, these *equites* depicted on a marble frieze fragment can be seen at the Museo Nacional de Arte Romano (Mérida, Spain). (Author's photograph)



Held at the Museo Arqueológico Nacional, this mosaic from the 4th century AD depicts a *retiarius* with his back to us. His left arm is protected by rolled-up fabric, possibly part of his tunic. (Ch. Vaginay-Darnetz)

We see, however, that other gladiators also used pectoral protection, even though their *armatura* did not grant it. Such armour was in fact an extension of the armband, towards the end of the period, in the form of a round or square plate fixed at heart level, on the strap holding the *manica* around the torso. This item is visible on representations of *retiarii* or *secutores*. This is particularly the case on a ceramic from the Historisches Museum der Pfalz (Germany), and on a knife handle from Piddington (England). On the

F

GLADIATORS, AD 200–250

(1 & 2) *Paegnarii*, *c.*AD 200

This duel between *paegnarii* is detailed on a beautiful mosaic from Nennig (Germany; see p.27). They wear coloured leggings, but only one gladiator also has a tunic, tucked into his legwear. The legs are trimmed with strips of fabric. The left arm is enclosed in a rigid sleeve, or padded fabric, which encompasses the hand. This armband is made up of two parts that hug the arm and are linked by straps. The shirtless man wears a decorated leather shell on his shoulder and fights with a stick, while his opponent uses a whip. Both have another curved stick in their left hand, to deflect blows.

(3) *Hoplomachus*, *c.*AD 200

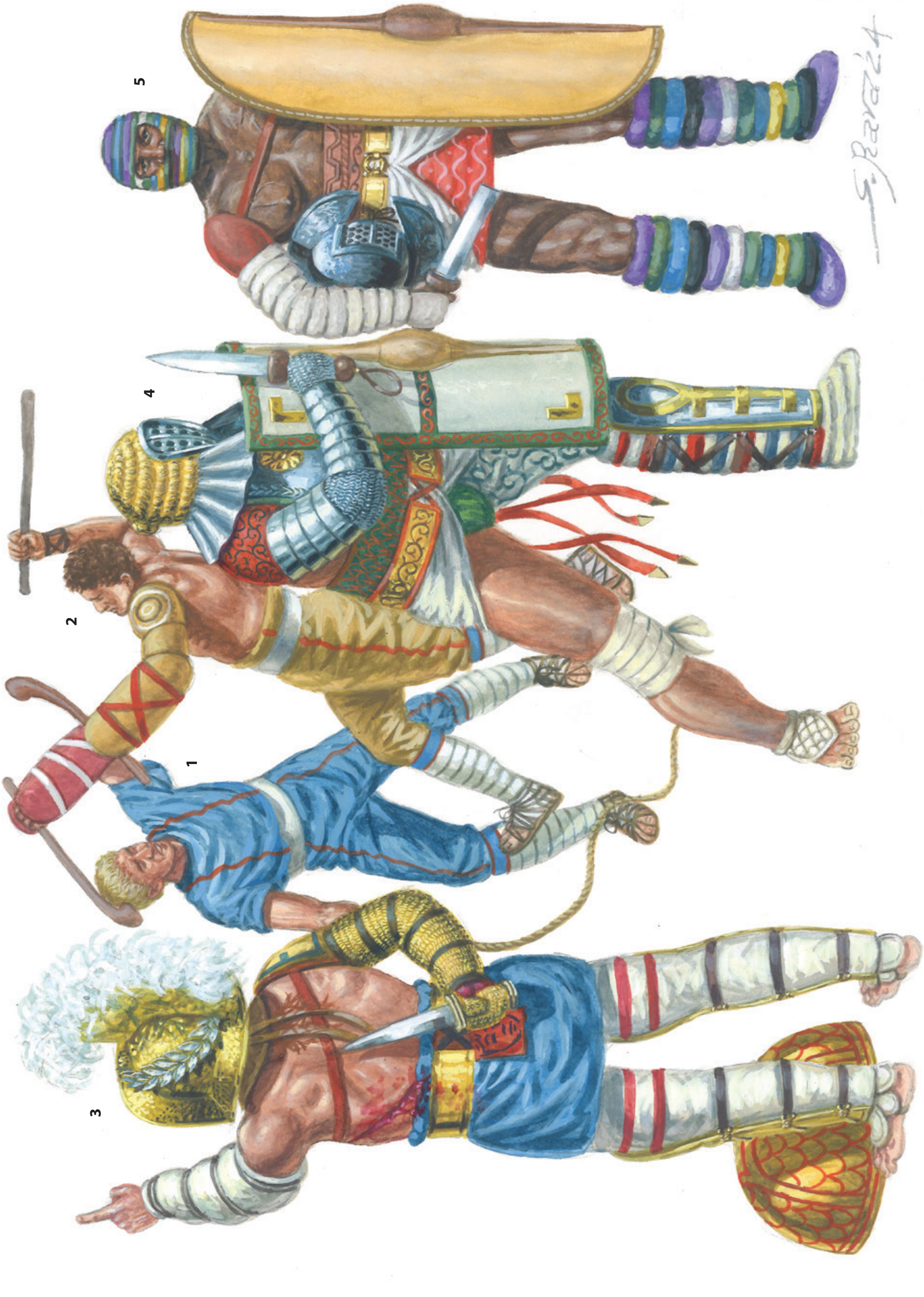
This *hoplomachus* is inspired by that shown in a mosaic from Bad Kreuznach, Germany (see p.20). He wears a Berlin helmet, but with the pointed crest of his *armatura*. The laurel wreath is visible on a Turkish bas-relief. We see the ties of his hood. Under his blue loincloth, he wears white pants with red stripes. This detail is also visible on a mosaic from Verona (see p.10). Under the buckle of his belt, on the back, hangs a piece of reinforcing leather. It is decorated with a Gorgon head, as shown on the handle of a penknife from the Musée romain d'Avenches (France). The decoration of the greaves is inspired by an ivory statuette, which also shows the shield motif. Curiously, this *hoplomachus* has a second armband on the left arm, to better support the shield.

(4) *Provocator*, *c.*AD 250

A stele from the Anadolu Medeniyetleri Müzesi (Ankara, Turkey; see p.18) details the equipment of the *provocator* Chrisampelos. His helmet is close to the Berlin type. The top is stamped to simulate a head of hair; he even has a bun. His pectoral is copied from a relief at the Afrodisias Müzesi (Turkey). The straps that cross at the back are considerably longer than earlier examples, and in some depictions fall all the way to the feet, weighted with a pendant. The loincloth has also evolved: the skirt is pushed aside and reveals the loincloth. The belt closure, with crossed laces, is once again at the front. The abdominal girdle is decorated with scales; his padded gaiters are coloured in different shades. The left thigh is covered by an embroidered legging. Also note the mail elbow piece on the *manica*.

(5) *Essedarius*, *c.*AD 250

This man has taken off his helmet (the same as that of the *provocatores*), allowing a clear view of his multicoloured hood. This depiction draws upon several different images, especially the Madrid mosaic (found near the Via Appia, Rome; see p.21) for the colours. He wears padded gaiters. His two-tone loincloth is inspired by the House of the Gladiators mosaic (Kourion, Cyprus; see p.13). On this mosaic, the characteristic swords lacking points are evident. The decorations on the loincloth and the abdominal girdle are drawn from bas-reliefs.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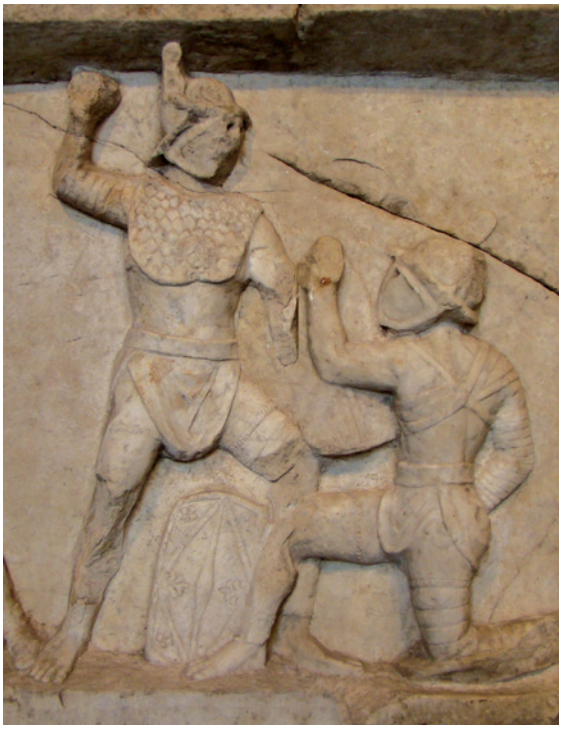
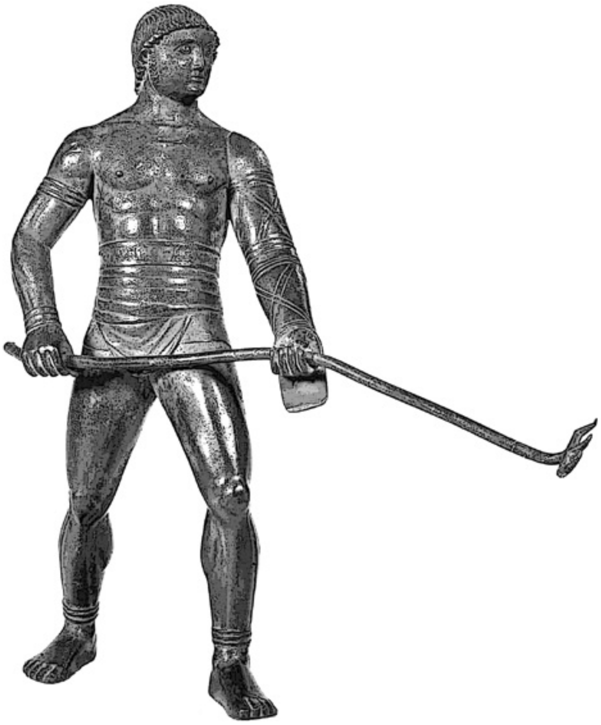




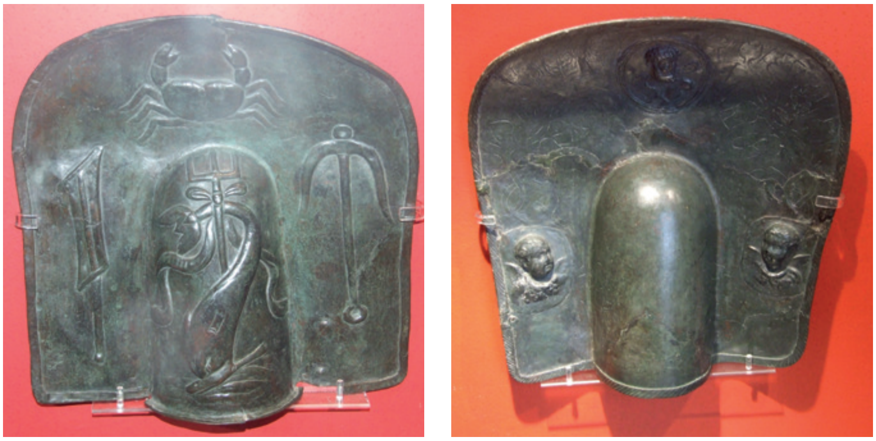
ABOVE LEFT
Dated to *c.*AD 30–40, this relief from the mausoleum of Cnaeus Clovatius, held at the Museo archeologico nazionale di Napoli, offers two views of the pectoral worn by *provocatores*. This example simulates rows of scales, with a Gorgon head. (G. Habasque)

ABOVE RIGHT
This statue from Esbarres (France) represents a *retiarius* from the 3rd or 4th century AD. (Author's drawing)

Villa Borghese mosaic we see them decorated with geometric patterns of various colours.

In the earlier study, we saw that use of the **armband** (*manica*) had become widespread, and covered only the forearm at the end of the 1st century BC. For surviving examples dated to the second decade of the 1st century AD, the cuff extends beyond the elbow. These were generally made of iron, but could also be made from bronze or brass (or feature alternate rows of different metals). Such armbands were shaped to form a half-tube, articulated like a lobster's tail. The existence of leather versions is certainly possible, although less likely. It might be that we can see them worn by *putti* gladiators on a mosaic from the villa of Bignor (England), red in colour and made of leather, unless enamelled metal is being depicted. Attached with straps to a fabric or leather sleeve (often red), the *manica lamminata* was normally worn on the inside of the arm, that is to say the most exposed side of the limb. We know of some military artefacts that allow us to understand its assembly and use. It further lengthened towards the middle of the century, up to the biceps, and a little later (before the destruction of Pompeii, according to the reliefs of the Scaurus mausoleum), up to the base of the shoulder. In the following centuries, it came to include a shell that covered the shoulder, probably made of leather (the metal would stiffen the joint), often red, sometimes blue. This elongation helps us to date ancient images, although examples without shoulder shells are still visible sporadically until the 4th century AD.

Other models existed, such as padded textile sleeves strapped with leather, as shown for example in a fresco from Périgueux (France; see p.46). The fabric rolls could be coloured differently, or decorated with painted or embroidered designs. The most beautiful example is an Egyptian coloured glass dating from the 2nd century AD: this depicts mostly red rolls, otherwise white and blue, and one of them is even decorated with white dots. Also



Discovered in Pompeii, these bronze shoulder pads for a *retiarius* are held at the Museo archeologico nazionale di Napoli. (R. D'Amato)

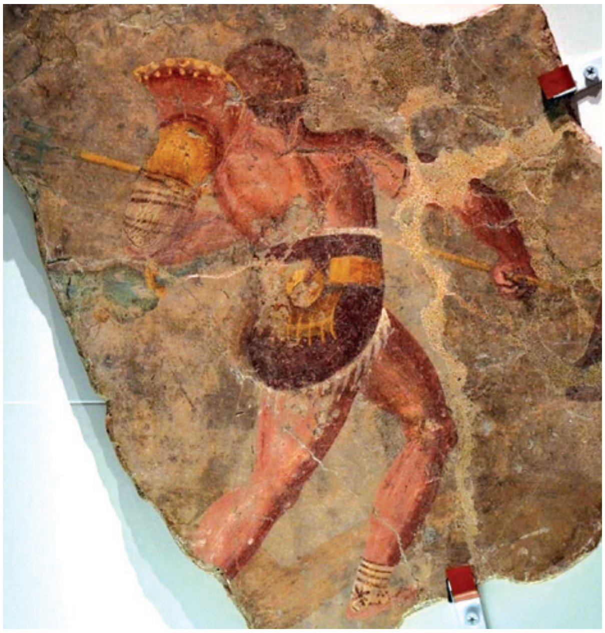
encountered is a strange type of armband, also made of fabric, but appearing more like a sheet or a rolled-up cape than a piece rationally designed for combat. The images are all late, and all concern *retiarii*, notably those on the Madrid mosaic (found near the Via Appia, Rome, and now held at the Museo Arqueológico Nacional; see p.42). This *manica* appears to be undone and falls carelessly on the forearm. On a fragment of bas-relief from the Museo Nacional de Arte Romano (Mérida, Spain; see p.41), dated to *c.*AD 20, two *equites* have mail armbands (iron or bronze), lined with thick leather. The mesh is heavy and soft, however, so that it has slipped. This is why straps were wrapped and crisscrossed around the armband to hold it in place. This system continued when the mail *manica* also lengthened. *Retirarii* seem to have favoured mesh during the final two centuries, perhaps because of its flexibility. In the 3rd century AD, perhaps only in the eastern part of the Empire, some even abandoned the metal shoulder plate entirely, instead adopting a mail *manica* that extended over the shoulder and chest, so as to cover most of the torso. This peculiarity is also visible on *secutores*. The mesh being relatively heavy, it needed to be secured on a leather support, itself securely attached to the shoulder by a set of straps passing around the chest, and over the shoulder.

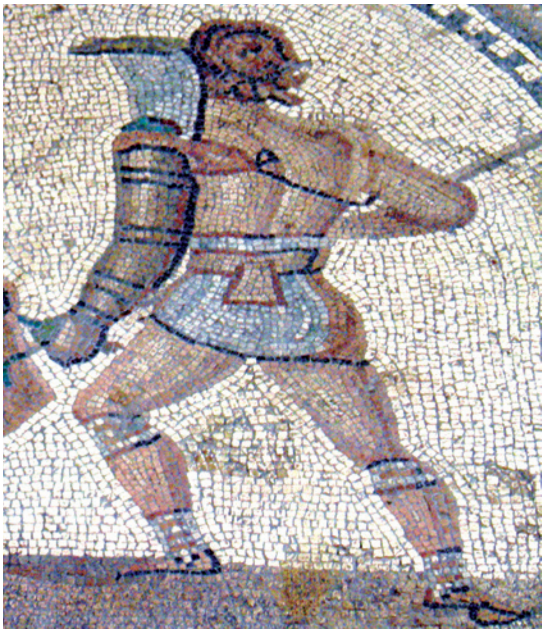
Lastly, there was a final version of metal *manica* made of iron scales. *Retiarii* and *secutores* on the Villa Borghese mosaic wear the only known examples. The hand protection was normally attached to the armband. On the *retiarius* statue from Esbarres (France; see p.44), held at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, it takes the form of a rigid plate of leather or metal, which emerges at the wrist. Elsewhere, it is usually shaped as a mitten.

To finish this inventory, let us mention a model specific to the *paegnarii*, taking the form of a tubular sleeve with a rigid appearance, worn on the left arm. It was open at its end, so that the hand could grasp a whip or stick.

One last curiosity: some images show gladiators with an armband on each arm, notably on a *hoplomachus* from the Museum Römerhalle (see p.20), a *retiarius* on a relief from the Baths of Diocletian in Rome and an *eques* on a painted glass from the Musée Guimet (Paris, France). Such a practice allowed the gladiator to carry a shield while reducing discomfort. This practice is extremely rare in surviving depictions.

Made of iron or bronze plate, the **shoulder protection** worn by the *retiarius* served as an extension of the *manica*. It compensated for the absence of a shield for this gladiator, who had both hands occupied. It is





ABOVE LEFT
Dating from the late 3rd century AD, this fragment of a fresco at Vesunna (Périgueux, France) shows how straps were attached to the back of the wide bronze belt worn by a *retiarius*. (Ch. Vaginay-Darnetz)

ABOVE RIGHT
Dating from the mid-3rd century AD, this mosaic detail from the Museum Römerhalle shows how the shoulder protection was secured. (Author's photograph)

possible that the *paegnarius*, who also held a weapon in each hand (a whip and a stick) needed a shoulder guard at the very beginning of the Principate, but perhaps less wide than that worn by the *retiarius*. For a long time we have called it *galerus*, because of a satire by Juvenal (*Sat*. VIII.200–10) that testifies to the fight of a certain Gracchus, *auctoratus et retiarius tunicatus*; he writes that 'from his neck hangs a golden cord attached to his elongated *galerus*' (*Sat*. VIII.207). The translators of this passage wondered about the identification of this *galerus*, and concluded that it was the shoulder plate – the only piece that they did not know how to name in the well-known equipment of the *retiarii*. In surviving depictions, however, we never see a cord between the neck and the shoulder pad. In reality, the word *galerus* means 'cap' or 'mitre', and in particular that of priests, which they were obliged to wear outside their homes, so as not to commit sacrilege. Coming from a very illustrious and noble family, Gracchus must indeed have been a priest; which increases the scandal. His priest's cap prohibiting him from wearing a helmet, he logically became a *retiarius*. This leather cap had a small olive-wood stick (*apex*) raised at the top, wrapped with a woollen cord (*apiculum*), symbol of his attachment to the gods. It could be rolled out in certain circumstances. This is therefore a contradiction; the word *galerus* must therefore be forgotten. Juvenal, who is one of the few to mention this shoulder guard, uses the expression *munimenta umeri*, which would simply be translated as 'shoulder protection' (*Sat*. VI.365.Ox7–Ox13). As with the *provocator*'s pectoral, it is possible that the Romans also used the word *spongia*: literally 'the sponge' (which absorbs blows). Hence perhaps a misinterpretation from the pen of Tertullian. This Christian author, who refrained from attending the amphitheatre spectacle, which he strongly condemned, and ignoring its technical vocabulary, wrote of 'the sponge of the *retiarii*'; he imagined that it absorbed the blood of the victims thrown to the ferocious beasts (Tertullian, *De spect*. XXV). This would make no sense. In the earlier study, we saw that the *retiarii* could participate in the killing of these condemned people to deliver the final blow.

Three bronze artefacts have been discovered in Pompeii, but one of them may have come from Herculaneum. We also know of a later iron artefact, from the Juslenville *fanum* (Belgium). These are plates 30–40cm tall, with the upper edge rounded, or with the corners trimmed. In the centre there is a bulge to accommodate the shoulder. On the reverse, small rings are used to attach it to the arm using leather straps, over the *manica*. The gladiator, however, would have needed strong straps on his torso to hold such an artefact in place. The plates are decorated with medallions, or stamped marine symbols. Old images show other types of decoration, and sometimes different colours of metal (or paint). In the Périgueux fresco (p.46), the bulge is gold (made of brass), but the upper plate is red, with a gold border and white dots.

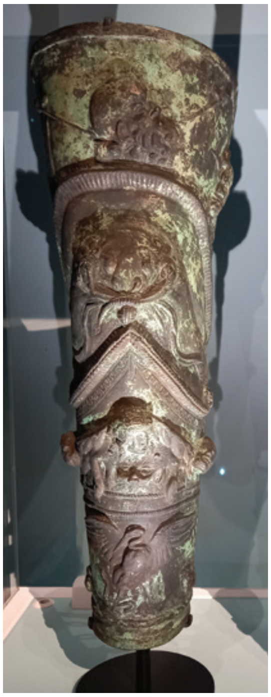
This plate offered protection, but also a handicap, because it hindered certain arm movements. To prevent it from hitting the gladiator's face, the upper part curved outwards, more and more over time. It also rose further, and no longer allowed the wearer to see over it. The *retiarius* could still see out at the sides, and that is why the side edges were eventually cut out, but it also made it easier for an opponent's dagger to pass through. In the 3rd century AD, certain gladiators therefore preferred to replace the plate with a more enveloping *manica* on the torso.

The dimensions of gladiators' **greaves** depended on the size of the shield used. Thus, the *Thraeces* and the *hoplomachi*, who had the smallest shields, had tall greaves, which developed little by little to cover up to half of the thighs. On the other hand, the *mirmillo* and the *secutor*, *armaturae* that were equipped with a taller *scutum*, wore a single small greave on the left shin, facing forward when the gladiator was in a combat posture. The *provocator*, for his part, whose shield was of an intermediate size, wore a single greave on the left leg, not exceeding the top of the knee.

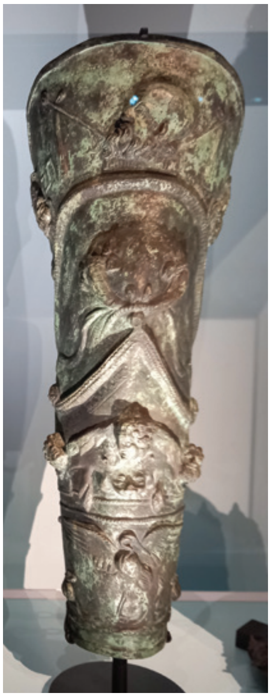
To avoid these greaves slipping and hindering the ankle joint, all were attached by some sort of straps, made of leather or canvas, covering the foot and ankle; in the case of the larger and heavier greaves, sometimes on heavily padded trousers, or leggings made of strips of fabric or leather rolled up to the top of the thighs. At the beginning of the 1st century AD, 'Greek' greaves (enveloping the legs and closing behind the calves) were no longer used; only the 'Roman' model, covering only the front of the leg and attaching at the back with straps, remained in use.

Numerous bronze artefacts have been discovered in Pompeii, varying in size, more or less decorated with stamped figures and engravings. This decoration increased during the 1st century AD, also using different metals. A mosaic from Verona (Italy; see p.10) shows greaves of three colours: gilded bronze, silver and red copper. A surviving pair of greaves belonging to a *parmatus* gladiator weighs between 4.5kg and 5kg. In the 4th century AD the size of greaves decreased.

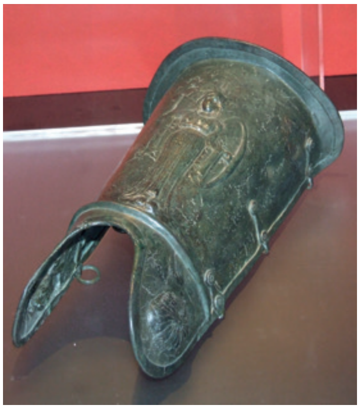
At the beginning of the 1st century AD, the leg protection worn by the *mirmillo* seems to have been a sort of leather gaiter, with embossed decorations, as suggested by the Storax monument (see p.12) and the Stabian Gate. The fresco from the Priscus tomb (see p.40) still shows its existence in the middle of the 1st century AD. On the latter, this gaiter is white, with red stars on the front. The bronze model then replaced it. Fixed to the front of the shin, and laced behind, it was semi-cylindrical in shape. It was indented on the instep to facilitate movement, and the two side sections were pushed back to accommodate the malleolus. The top was folded at a right angle



Held at the Museo archeologico nazionale di Napoli, these highly decorated greaves worn by a *Thraex* or a *hoplomachus* were discovered in Pompeii. (Author's photographs)



for a few centimetres, in order to maintain contact with the shield away from the shin, and thus reduce the risk of trauma in the event of a sudden impact. The gladiator school of Pompeii delivered eight examples, more or less decorated with mythological figures. They measure 30cm in height, on average, and weigh almost 1kg for the heaviest.



This short greave worn by a *mirmillo* or a *secutor* is held at the Museo archeologico nazionale di Napoli. (R. D'Amato)

In the 2nd century AD, the shape of these half-greaves remained the same, but their height decreased, sometimes to the point that the cut-out for the foot was found mid-shin. The Pergamonmuseum (Berlin, Germany) has in its collections a greave dating from the 2nd or 3rd century AD, similar in shape to those found in Pompeii, but with only a light engraved grid as decoration. It accompanies a late *mirmillo* helmet similarly decorated.

During the 3rd and especially in the 4th century AD, the greave worn by the *secutor* changed shape to become a simple rectangular plate, as we can see in several reliefs from the Baths of Diocletian in Rome, from the Burdur Arkeoloji Müzesi, and the Villa Borghese mosaic. On the last of these, we can observe the variety of metals and geometric decorations.

The *scissor* wore two similar short greaves, one on each leg, because he did not carry a shield. The *essedarius* could also have worn two, although this was not widespread; during the early 1st century AD, he frequently wrapped his legs with *fasciae*. Greaves were not adopted until a few decades later. Examination of the representations of *essedarii* proves, however, that they could also wear two strong padded socks, stitched so as to form a succession of large concentric bulges. They were generally white, but mosaics from the 3rd century AD depict some flights of fancy: bulges coloured alternately in blue-green, white and red. On the Kourion mosaic we can see a *mirmillo* gaiter with vertical green and red stripes.

G

GLADIATORS, AD 250–320

(1) *Retiarius*, *c.*AD 250

Standing on a *pons*, a high footbridge with access ramps, the *retiarius* fights with his trident and dagger, but he does not have a net. He throws heavy balls at his opponent. The colourful *manica* is drawn from a painted glass found in Egypt, on which we also see this loincloth and yellow abdominal girdle. The *manica* extends over half of the chest. Also colourful, the shoulder plate is reproduced from a fresco from Périgueux (France; see p.46). The foot protection is visible on this same fresco. Note the two hooks at the base of the trident iron, to hook the *secutor* shield.

(2) *Secutor*, *c.*AD 250

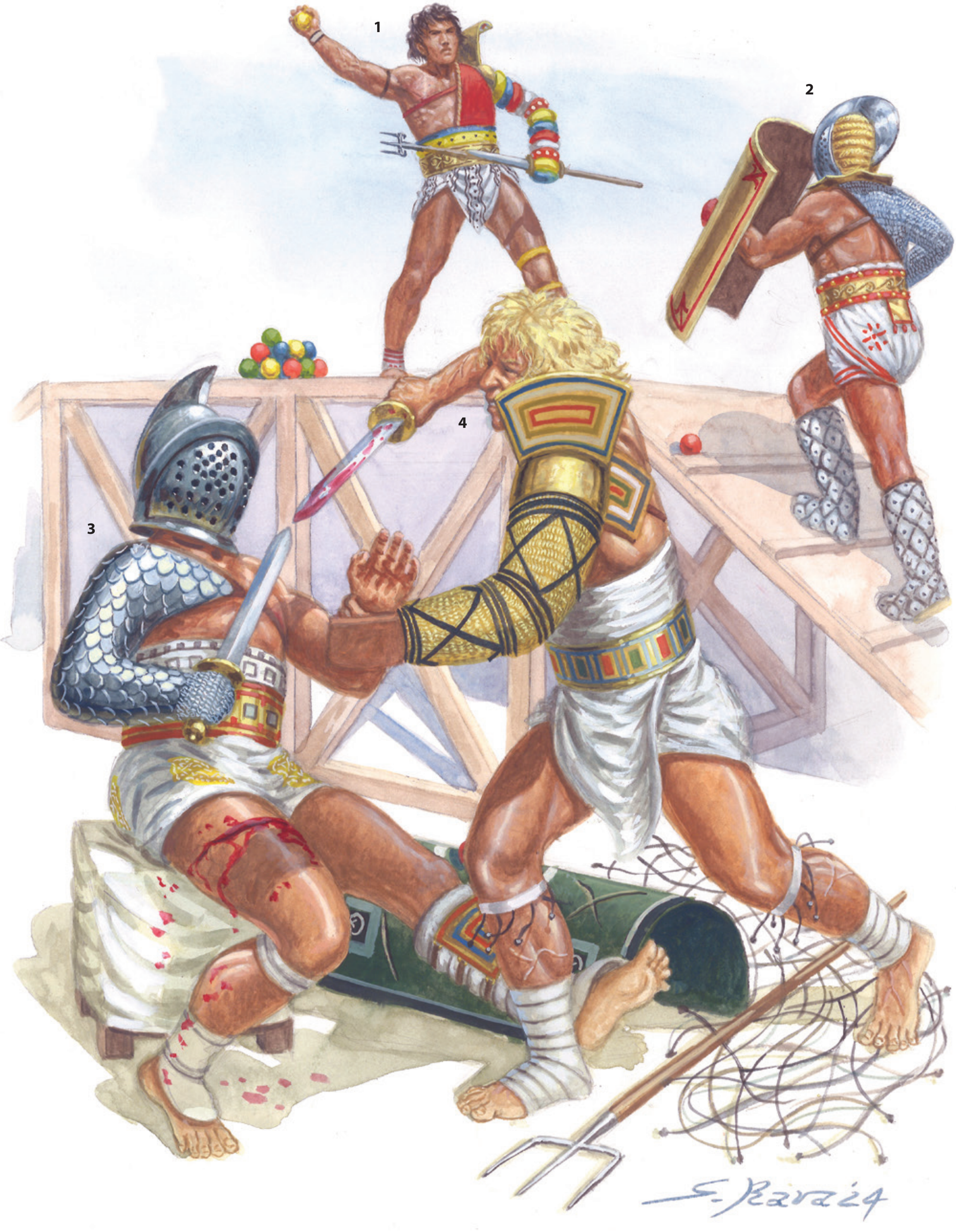
Inspired by a stele at the Hierapolis Arkeoloji Müzesi (Pamukkale, Turkey) and a clay miniature from the Altes Museum (Berlin, Germany), this *secutor* is attempting to dislodge the *retiarius* at the top of the ramp. His Tralles-type helmet is an evolution of the Pompeian model, with a crest that continues down the centre of the faceplate, to reinforce it. The top is stamped to simulate a head of hair. Multiple perforations have replaced the small round eyeholes, which proved insufficient for seeing and breathing. The neck cover has become wider again, in a spiderweb pattern, the better to cover the upper body. Securely held by straps, the *manica* worn by the *secutor* is made of mail, and covers the chest and back very widely. The *scutum* is covered with a sheet of brass, with painted decorations.

(3) *Secutor*, *c.*AD 320

This other staging of the fight is intriguing. It is visible on two different depictions, but we see no trident, no net, no shield, only daggers. Perhaps it is the end of a *sine missione* fight, when a gladiator could no longer stand. His helmet is an evolved model; its crest is now pointed, and can therefore be snagged by the net. His loincloth is white, decorated with *orbiculi* (geometric rosettes). Copied from the Villa Borghese mosaic (Rome, Italy), the abdominal girdle goes up to the chest. The armband is visible for the first time in iron scales.

(4) *Retiarius*, *c.*AD 320

This equipment is inspired by the Villa Borghese mosaic. The loincloth again has the shape of that found in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, but it goes higher on the abdomen. The bronze belt has a geometric decoration, undoubtedly enamelled. Weighted straps are attached under the knees. The *manica* is made of bronze rings, held by crossed straps, as shown in the statue from Esbarres (France; see p.44). The shoulder pad is attached to an elongated piece of leather that covers part of the chest and back, attached around the torso by a strap.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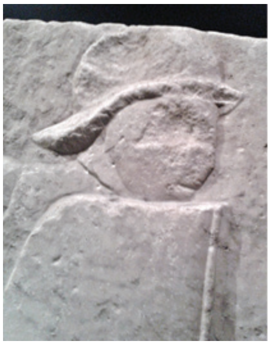
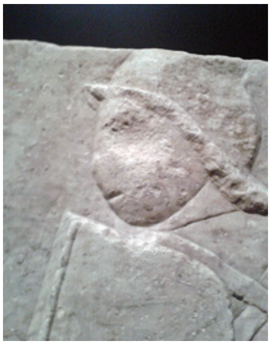




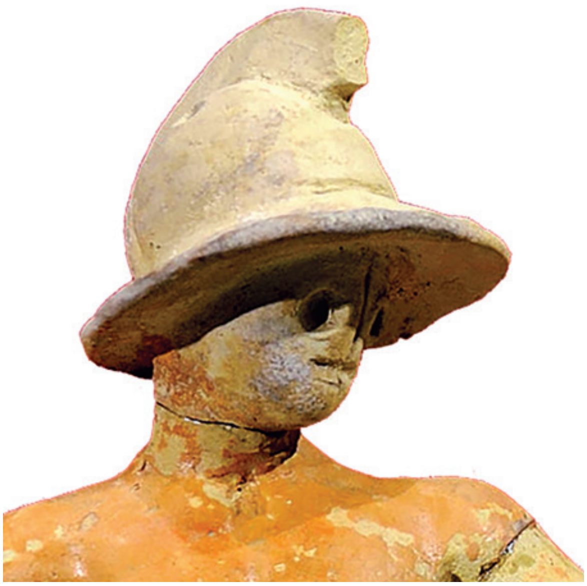
Details of the Castrum Novum relief, held at the Museo Archeologico Comunale de Civitavecchia (Italy). The two *provocatores* wear the same style of helmet, with a simplified anthropomorphic mask. (O. Kueppers)

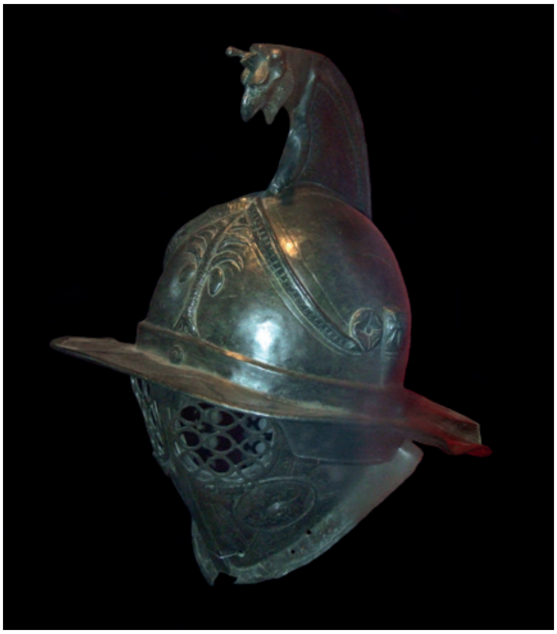
Helmets

During the 1st century BC, military helmets of the Hellenistic type that were used by gladiators were transformed, sometimes in unconventional ways. Models specific to the profession thus appeared. They continued to evolve over time to achieve optimal protection, but this process entailed a reduction in comfort, visibility and ventilation. At the end of the 1st century BC, there already existed the first helmet with a visor covering the face, the so-called '**sport helmet**' worn by the *essedarii* (but probably not systematically), and occasionally by other *armaturae* (see Gilbert 2022: 54). In the long run, this model undoubtedly motivated the desire to add a visor to other helmets.

Two artefacts from this period bear witness to this first attempt: a figurine of a *hoplomachus* from the Museo archeologico Nazionale di Taranto (Italy; see p.51), and a bas-relief from Castrum Novum (Etruria, Italy) illustrating a duel between two *provocatores*. The Castrum Novum relief still shows the strap hanging from the belt, as well as swords of the 'Mainz' type, which allows us to date it to the last decade of the 1st century BC, or to the very beginning of the 1st century AD. In these images, the three gladiators wear the same helmet, reinforced by a visor vaguely representing a human face, with two openings for the eyes, and also another for the mouth, which allows the gladiator to breathe better. This face is simplified to the extreme, and the protuberance of the nose is barely evdent. The visor is made of two symmetrical halves. The dividing line is clearly visible, between the forehead and the chin, following the line of the nose. This peculiarity of the visor of gladiator helmets distinguishes them from models of military 'face helmets', the visor of which was made up of a single piece. This first visor does not seem to fit, however, perhaps because it is insufficiently secured and articulated. At the end of the reign of Augustus, or at the beginning of that of Tiberius, another model of visor was invented, pierced with two round eyeholes, but the opening for the mouth had disappeared. The adoption of this type of visor became widespread, undoubtedly because, at the same time, swords became shorter, forcing gladiators to fight hand-to-hand, and therefore take more risks. This way of hiding their face also added an element of mystery, which itself enhanced the appeal of these fights.

Appearing at the beginning of the 1st century AD, the resultant helmet became known as the **Chieti helmet** after the reliefs of the Storax monument in Chieti (see p.12), because all of the gladiators depicted in them – *equites*, *mirmillones*, *Thraeces* and *hoplomachi* – wear this elegant model. The *essedarii* are not represented, but we know, thanks to a depiction on an oil lamp, that they also used this type of helmet for a time. Likewise, the Castrum Novum relief shows two *provocatores* wearing the Chieti helmet, with the first attempt at a visor. It is a simplified version of the ancient Hellenistic helmets. The large brim has been flattened and the cheek guards have disappeared, freeing the fighter's field of vision, but also exposing more of his face. A visor is therefore added to protect it. A vertical bar hides the gap between the two halves of the visor, which are bent on their edge to better stop and deflect the opponent's thrusting blows. Eyeholes were a vulnerability that an opponent could exploit. This was why round grilles (perhaps even square, according to the Scaurus mausoleum) were quickly fixed in front. Vision was thereby further reduced, which, added to the difficulty of breathing in these closed helmets, made its use more of a handicap than an advantage.





Besides a few fragments, we know of two complete artefacts found in Pompeii. One example is intended for a *mirmillo*; weighing approximately 3.5kg, it is undecorated, with a brace stamped on the front (a characteristic of Attic helmets), and with an angular crest. The second surviving helmet is identical, but with the specific crest of the *Thraex armatura*, finished with a griffin head. It is elaborately decorated, with numerous engravings and stamped motifs: a palm tree on the forehead, and weapons of *equites* on the cheek guards, with the characteristic *parma equestris*. We can therefore assume that it was originally an *eques* helmet, traditionally worn without a crest, which was reattributed to a *Thraex* thanks to the addition of a characteristic crest. Also found in Pompeii, a *provocator* helmet decorated with real *provocator* weapons supports this hypothesis.

A new generation of headgear emerged around the middle of the 1st century AD, when the eyeholes were replaced by grilles covering the upper half of the visor, thus improving both vision and ventilation. The brim rounds strongly at the front, however, reducing the field of vision. Weighing between 3.5kg and 4.5kg, this new model, known as the **Pompeii helmet**, did not replace the previous one. Our corpus – notably the Zliten mosaic – reveals that they co-existed for a long time, during the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. Seven examples were discovered in Pompeii, in the barracks. They are decorated with relief motifs, to a greater or lesser degree, most of which are very elaborate, with mythological figures and various symbols borrowed largely from the register of imperial propaganda inaugurated under Augustus. These are show pieces. We know of models for *Thraeces* with the griffin-head crest, as well as models for *mirmillones* and probably also *hoplomachi*, which share a similar crest, although ancient images suggest that the latter may be more rounded and pointed at the front. The visors of the Chieti and Pompeii helmets open wide enough to allow the head to pass through. A leather strap is used to close them.

Alongside the Chieti and Pompeii helmets, over-represented in the iconography of the 1st century AD, there are other 'non-regulatory' models, which were not developed as successfully. This is undoubtedly the case for

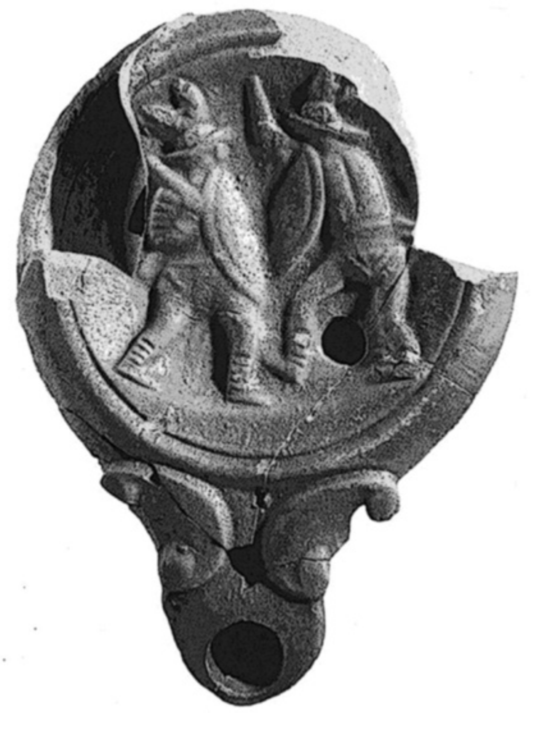
ABOVE LEFT
Discovered in 1914 and held at the Museo archeologico Nazionale di Taranto (Italy), this earthenware figurine shows the same helmet and mask as the Castrum Novum relief (see p.50). (R. D'Amato)

ABOVE RIGHT
Dating from the mid-1st century AD, this *Thraex* helmet of the Chieti type is held at the Museo archeologico nazionale di Napoli. (R. D'Amato)

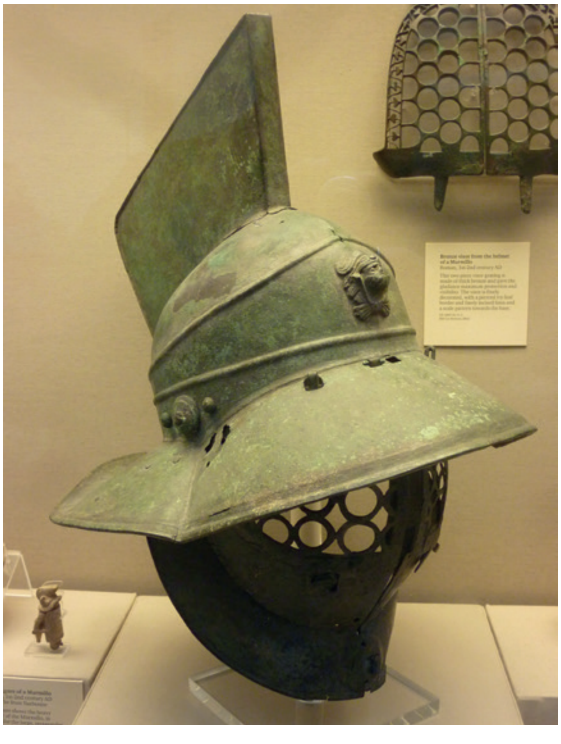
the *mirmillo* helmet, of unknown provenance, acquired at Sotheby's in 1946 and exhibited today at the British Museum. Its weight does not exceed 2kg, it is poorly decorated, and does not seem to have had feathers. The increase in throat protection is notable, a peculiarity that would be further accentuated on the following 'Berlin' type. In its form and chronology, it undoubtedly slightly precedes the Pompeii helmet.

During the 2nd century AD a new type, known as the **Berlin helmet**, appeared, which better protected the neck. Its name comes from a spectacular artefact exhibited at the Pergamonmuseum (see p.53), probably coming from the Adriatic area. Made from sheet bronze, its weight must have approached or exceeded 4kg. With a very massive appearance, almost unsightly compared to the elegant Pompeii helmets, it impresses with the shape of its brim. It very closely frames the visor over its entire height, perpendicularly, covering the neck and shoulders. Another new feature: the grille covers the entire face, which benefits both vision (except at the sides) and ventilation. More open, the face is also more exposed, which is why the grille (still in two halves) is much thicker, to better resist blows. A thick crest has been added, originally containing a piece of wood in which the feathers of the plume were planted. This helmet is entirely covered with an engraved grid decoration, which can also be found on an associated short greave.

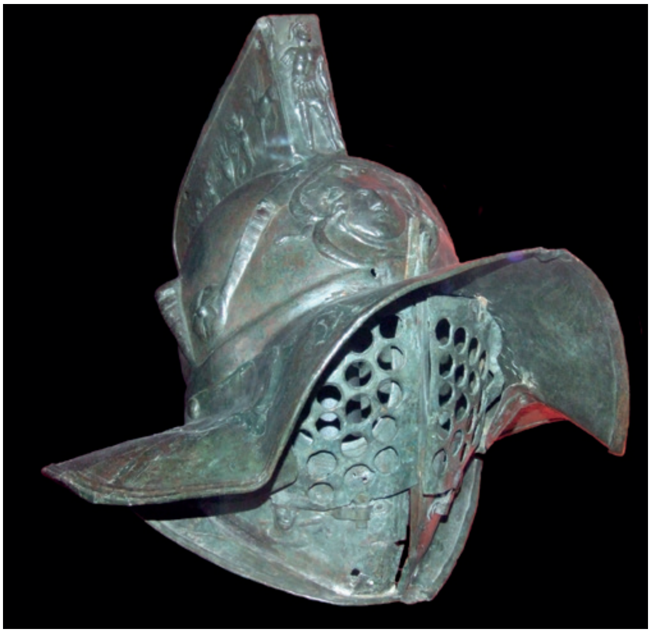
Apart from this example, the Berlin helmet has left little archaeological evidence, other than a few grilles and a very damaged cap discovered in ancient Pollentia (Spain). The Berlin helmet was used for different *armaturae*. A Cologne goblet shows a *Thraex* wearing this helmet, with a crest crowned with a griffin head. At the Musée du Louvre, a bronze figurine of a *hoplomachus* wears this same type of helmet, with the pointed crest of this *armatura*. It was in use until the 3rd century AD and co-exists with earlier models, as we can see for example on a mural at the villa of Mechern (Germany).

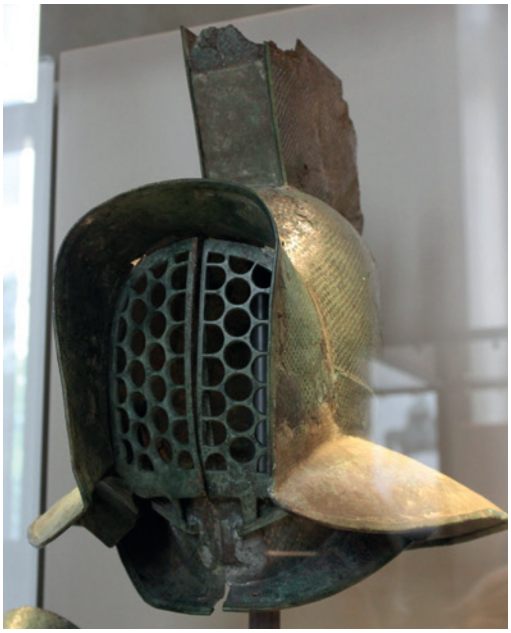


BELOW LEFT
This lamp depicts a duel between *essedarii* wearing Chieti-type helmets. (Author's drawing)



BELOW RIGHT
Representing an intermediate stage between the Chieti type and the Pompeii type, this *mirmillo* or *hoplomachus* helmet is kept at the British Museum. (S. Lagrange)





ABOVE LEFT
Dating from the third quarter of the 1st century AD, this *mirmillo* helmet of the Pompeii type is held at the Museo archeologico nazionale di Napoli. (R. D'Amato)

ABOVE RIGHT
This *mirmillo* helmet of the Berlin type is held at the Pergamonmuseum. (N. Montacq-Velten)

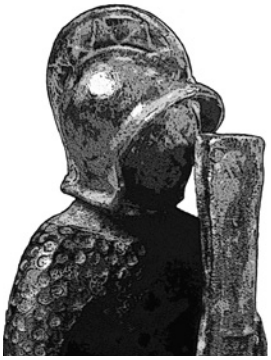
At the beginning of the Principate, like most *armaturae*, the *provocatores* and *essedarii* also tried the Chieti helmet. Unconvinced, they adopted a particular type, incorporating some features of the contemporary military helmet, the so-called Weisenau type: the forehead is reinforced with an arch and the helmet has a curved neck cover. Dated to *c.*AD 20–30, the first representation of the ***provocator* helmet** can be seen on the Stabian Gate relief. We can guess that there was an appendage at the top: probably feathers attached to the sides of the helmet. It has no panache, nor a metal crest. There is, however, an exception on the Zliten mosaic, where two *provocatores* have large feather crests. The discoveries in Pompeii include two complete *provocator* helmets (4.3kg and 3.4kg) and two other fragmentary ones. The eyeholes of all of these artefacts are protected with round grilles of the style associated with the Chieti helmet.

From the 3rd century AD, a radical change in shape took place, to better protect the neck and upper body of the gladiator, as on the Berlin helmet. Very well represented in images from the eastern part of the Empire, this new model was characterized by a strongly flared and falling peripheral collar, protecting the upper body. It was sometimes wavy, to make it more effective. The top of the helmet was round and smooth, but it could be stamped to simulate hair (and even a bun). The two ends of this collar pointed towards each other, to reduce the vulnerable space at the throat. The visor was almost square, entirely covered by a grille, and framed by a protruding border, as on the Berlin helmet.

The *essedarii* perhaps also used a second model, ovoid and without a neck guard or arch. We can see these two variations on the Zliten mosaic: the front fighter wears an egg-shaped helmet (as on a Maastricht stele), but the second, viewed from behind, shows a *provocator*'s neck cover. These two models co-existed, and lasted until the 3rd century AD, in their evolved version. The ovoid model, without a grille on the eyeholes (because the eyes could not be harmed by cutting), is still visible on the Kourion mosaic (see p.14). Could it be a *secutor* helmet, stripped of its crest?

The *secutor* was introduced during the reign of Caligula, to replace the *mirmillo* in his duel against the *retiarius*. Indeed, the angular crest of the

Dated to the 2nd century AD, this bronze figurine representing a *secutor* wears a Berlin helmet adapted to his *armatura*. (Author's drawing)



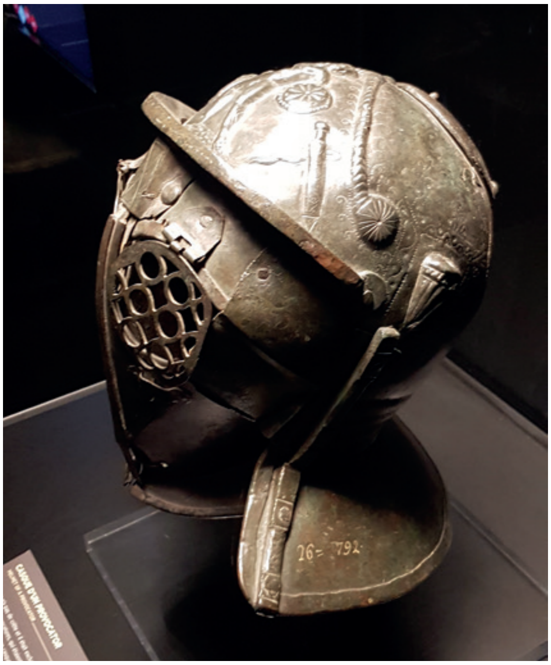
mirmillo's helmet clung too easily to his opponent's net, which was a mortal disadvantage. The helmet was therefore revised, and a new model was created, known as the ***secutor* helmet**. The crest was now round, in a half-moon, so that the net would slide off. The corners of the helmet were also rounded, and the eyeholes were reduced so that the tips of the trident could not slip through. The thickness of the visor was increased to better resist the violent blows of the trident. Also opposed to the *retiarius*, the *scissor* benefited from this same innovation. Three examples were found in Pompeii, two of which are partially made of iron.

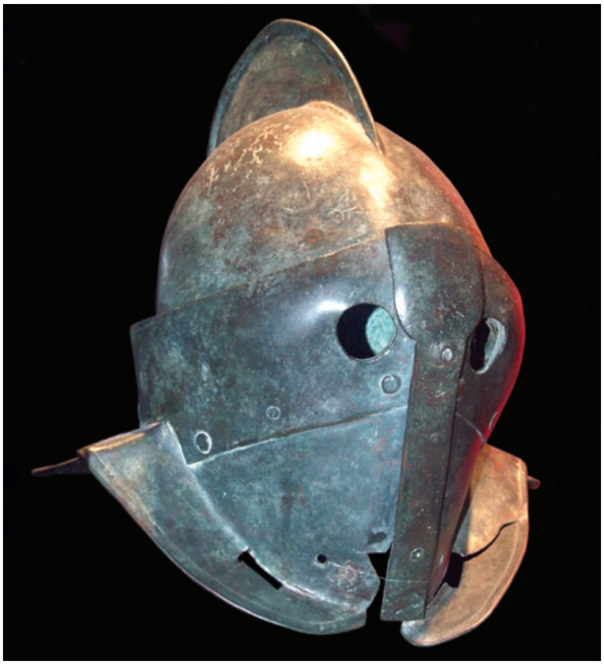
These arrangements proved insufficient in the long run, however, and new developments were necessary. In artefacts dated to the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, we often observe the replacement of the two eyeholes (which measure barely more than 3cm in diameter) with multiple perforations in the visor, to make it easier for the fighter to see and breathe. During this same period, we also see the appearance of a sort of gorget. At the Istanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri, the steles of the *secutores* Mentor and Victor show a gorget with a particular shape, like a spiderweb. Markus Junkelmann (2008) called it the Tralles type, after the city of origin of these two bas-reliefs. In many surviving depictions, this gorget is non-existent, and the base of the helmet surrounds the gladiator's neck.

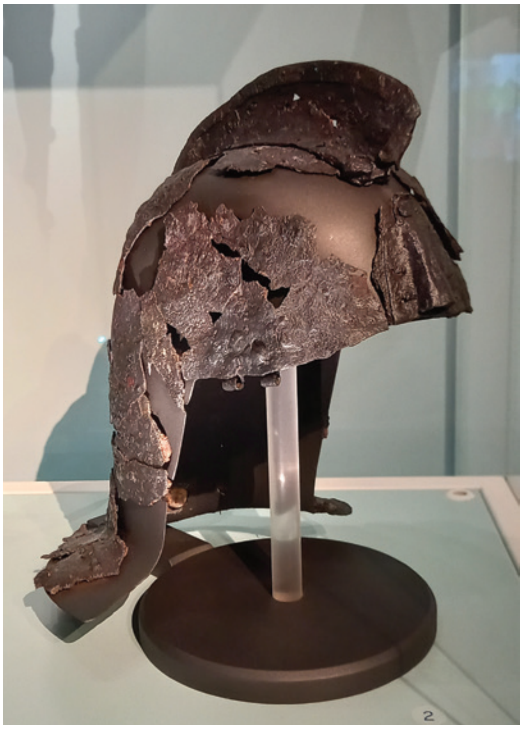
A new helmet-opening system may have been developed, presented by a famous *secutor* statuette from the Musée de l'Arles Antiques (France). The one-piece visor opens upwards, like a car bonnet, thanks to a hinge attached to the forehead. We do not believe it depicts a real helmet, however. Two *secutor* helmets dating from the 2nd or 3rd century AD were recently discovered in Poitiers (France; see p.55). These exceptional, but fragmentary, artefacts have hinges on the temples, proving the existence of two half-visors that closed like the cheek guards of a military helmet. Until the end, the helmets worn by the *secutor/scissor* presented a greater variety of design than those of the other *armaturae*.

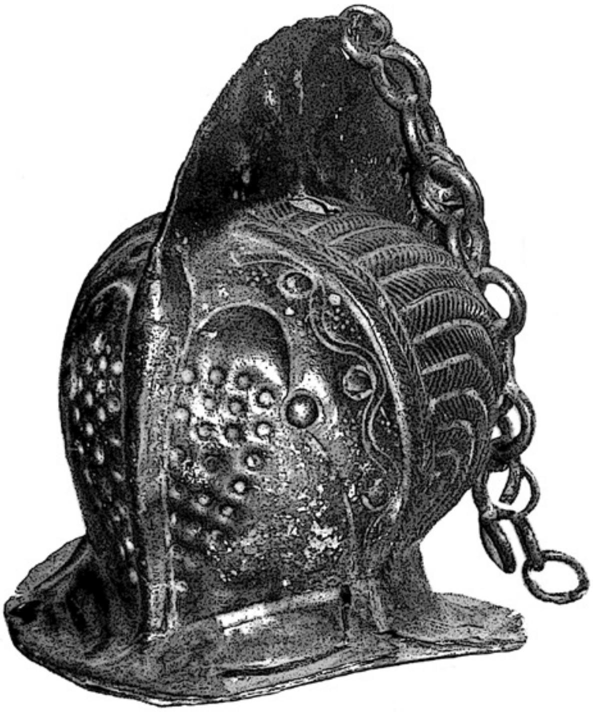
BELOW LEFT
Now held at the Museo archeologico nazionale di Napoli, this helmet worn by a *provocator* or an *essedarius* was found in Pompeii. (G. Habasque)

BELOW RIGHT
Dating from the mid-1st century AD, this *secutor* helmet is held at the Museo archeologico nazionale di Napoli. (R. D'Amato)





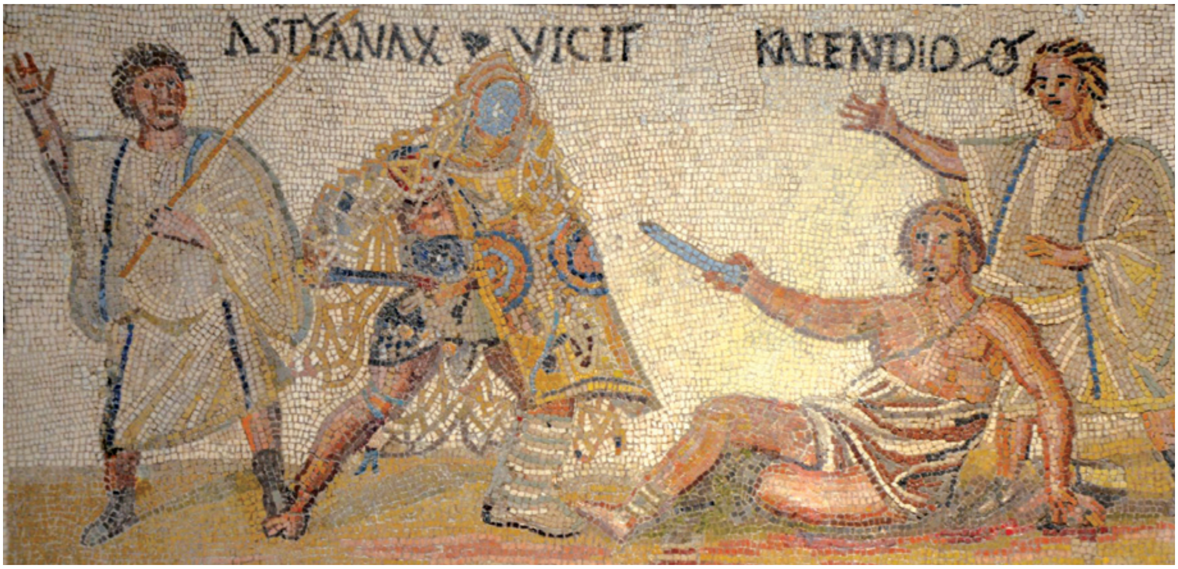




We have little evidence of the helmets of late *gladiatura*. The images are few, and the artefacts non-existent. We do not even know how many *armaturae* remained to this date. We note a form of helmet that seems to have replaced many others, however, and which is common to several categories of gladiators. We would therefore posit a new type, derived directly from the latest model of *provocator* helmet. That type is used by a couple of gladiators on a relief at the Neues Museum (see p.19) showing a late *Thraex* and a *mirmillo*. The first still sports a crest with a griffin-head protome, while his opponent has only a curved crest with a sharp edge at the top. On the Kourion mosaic (see p.7), there is a *Thraex* wearing a roughly similar helmet, but without the griffin head, and the metal crest continues to the level of his shoulder blades, thus offering protection against an attack from the rear. His opponent, a *mirmillo*, has a helmet of the same type. In depictions from the 3rd century AD, this sharp crest tops a substantial number of helmets, particularly of the *secutores*, which contradicts the need to shed the *retiarius* net. Consequently, one may wonder if this prominent edge was sharpened, to cut the nets that would have caught on it. Several *secutores* on the Villa Borghese mosaic wear such helmets, as do the gladiators depicted on a fragment of relief from the Museo Nazionale Romano (Rome), or on another discovered in 1880 at the Vigna Aquari (Rome). Vision is provided by two reduced holes, or a series of smaller ones that dot the front of the visor. On the Villa Borghese mosaic, the other *secutores* wear helmets that take the shape of round and smooth hoods, all in bronze, or in iron with the visor made in bronze. In the East, the helmets were different, and were more reminiscent of the first models worn by *secutores*, with their ovoid shape and their visor with side folds, but they had a large brim that went around the head at forehead level. Similar helmets can be seen on bas-reliefs at the Hierapolis Arkeoloji Müzesi, worn by *dimachaerii* facing *scissores*.

ABOVE LEFT
Dating from the 2nd or 3rd century AD, this *secutor* helmet was recently discovered in Poitiers (France). (Author's photograph)

ABOVE RIGHT
Held at the Varnenski arheologicheski muzey (Bulgaria), this bronze *balsamarium* (a container for prefume or cosmetics) represents a *secutor* helmet of the Tralles type. Note the wide and flat neck guard, the thick and prominent 'nose' in the extension of the crest and the multiple perforations in the visor. (Author's drawing)



Dating from the early 4th century AD and held at the Museo Arqueológico Nacional, this depiction shows the combat between a *secutor* and a *retiarius*. The latter will be executed, as indicated by the gestures of the referees, and the Greek letter Q (Theta). (Ch. Vaginay-Darnetz)

Shields

Almost all gladiators carried a shield. The few who did not have one, due to not having a free hand to hold it, were protected by additional body defences, such as a breastplate or a special shoulder guard. Also used when participating in a *venatio*, gladiator shields are well known. They have already been examined in the earlier study, and we will not repeat what has already been written, because many of their important characteristics were settled by the end of the 1st century BC.

H

GLADIATORS, AD 300–350

(1) *Threax*, *c.*AD 300

This man is reproduced after the Kourion mosaic, illustrating the gladiator Lytras (see p.7). His helmet topped with a sharp metal crest seems to be a transitional model between the Berlin version and the helmet used from the beginning of the 4th century AD. The griffin head has disappeared. The cuff is made of hinged iron blades, with plates encompassing the shoulder and covering the hand. The greaves are also made of iron with a very simple shape and no decoration; they are worn over red-and-green padded gaiters. His *sica* is barely curved, as at the beginning of the 1st century AD. The decoration of the shield is also very simple. Note the distinctive shape of the *umbo*.

(2) *Eques*, *c.*AD 300–350

This *eques* is visible on the Madrid mosaic (see p.21). He wears a simple iron helmet reminiscent of the old Chieti model; this seems to have become common to all *armaturae*, with their particular characteristics. The half-visor is perforated with multiple holes. This gladiator always wears a tunic and bands around his legs. We do not know if his shield was still the *parma equestris*, or if it was now made of wood. The *eques* always wears shoes. His sword resembles the half-*spatha* used in the Roman Army.

(3) *Dimachaerus*, *c.*AD 300–350

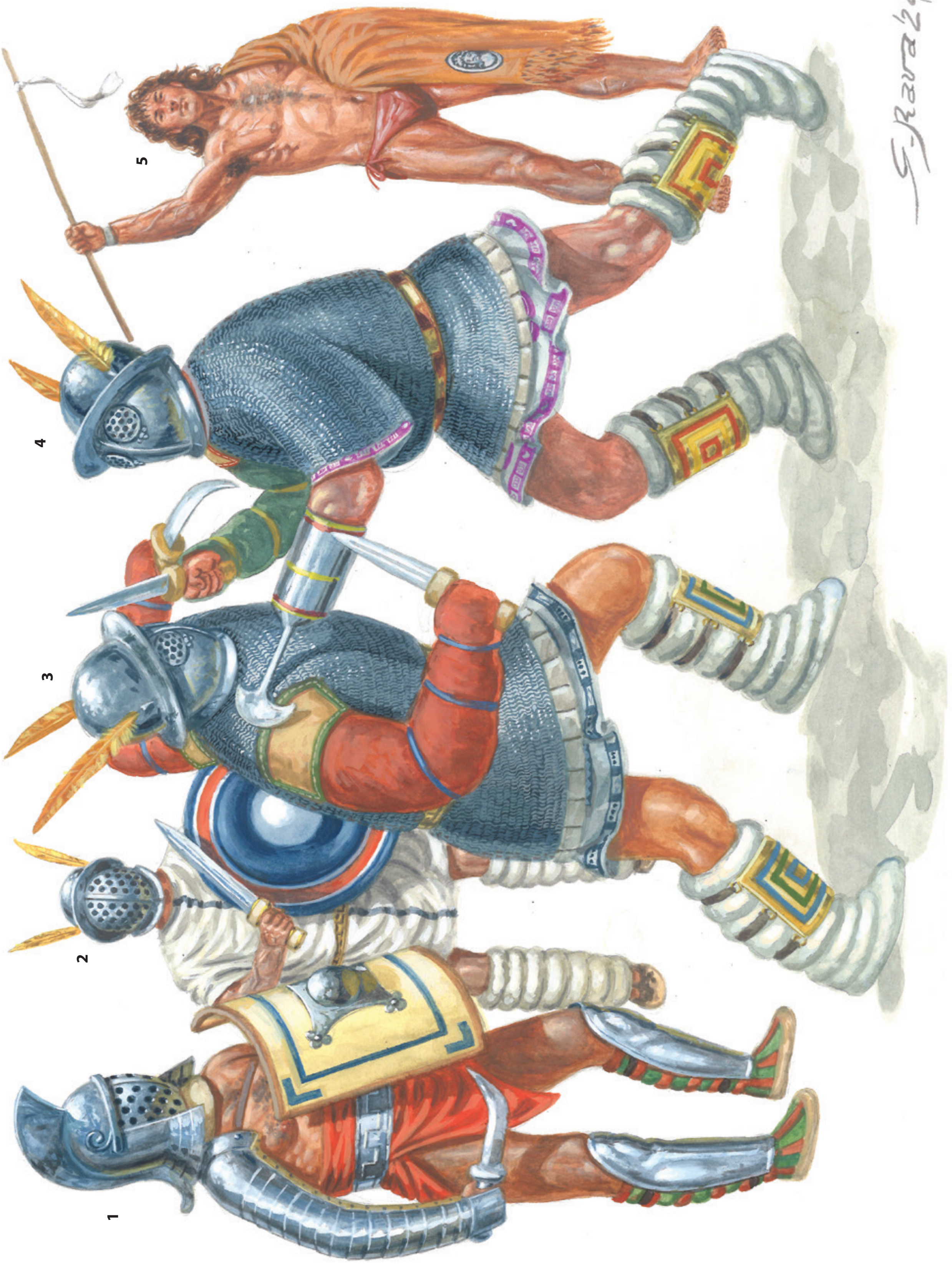
The same simple style of helmet also equips this *dimachaerus* and his opponent. He has two swords (which explains the name of his *armatura*): a straight sword in his right hand and a sickle-shaped *sica* in his left hand. He appears to be wearing two identical armbands, made of leather or thick fabric, complemented by a plate covering the shoulder, like the *Threax* in this illustration. Reliefs held at the Hierapolis Arkeoloji Müzesi (see p.33) might suggest that the *scissor* and the *dimachaerus* could also fight wearing only the tunic.

(4) *Scissor*, *c.*AD 300–350

This man is equipped in the same way as his opponent, other than his weapons. His helmet has round mesh eyecups, as shown on a clay statuette from the Ephesus Arkeoloji Müzesi (Selçuk, Turkey; see p.33). The *scissor* wears a tunic decorated with *orbiculi* under a padded vest (*thorachomachus*) and mail. His legs are proected by padded gaiters and short square greaves. The decor is visible on the Villa Borghese mosaic. His armband is made of leather or thick fabric. His sword is straight. The left arm is enclosed in a metal tube ending in a sharp crescent-shaped blade.

(5) *Rudiarius*, *c.*AD 320

The *rudiarius* was the victorious gladiator who received the *rudis* as a reward. This *rudis* was not a wooden sword, as is often claimed, but a simple wand, identical to that of the referee, with a ribbon tied on it. It symbolized his final leave; he would no longer be forced to fight, and therefore abandoned all his defensive and offensive gear. He wears only a loincloth, perhaps in leather, red or white on the Villa Borghese mosaic, and a coat decorated with *orbiculi*.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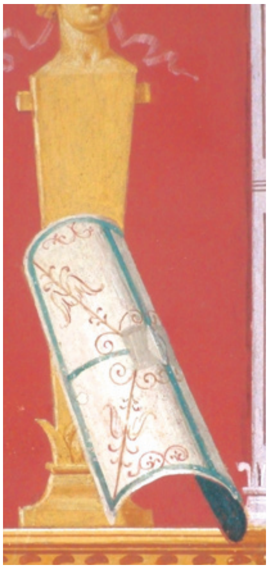


In this copy of a painting of the podium of the amphitheatre in Pompeii, a *mirmillo* or *secutor* shield has been given as a votive offering by a victorious gladiator. (R. D'Amato)

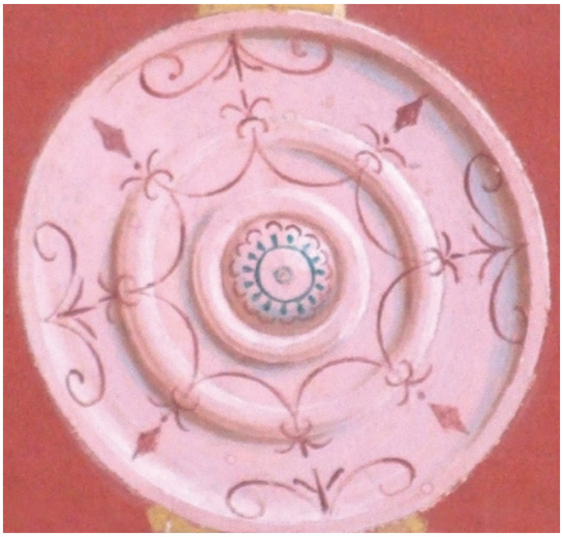
At the beginning of the Principate, the **wooden shields** of the various existing *armaturae* had not evolved since the end of the 1st century BC, when it was decided to reduce their size. On the *scuta* and *parmae*, use of the central wooden *spina* (provided with a central bulge, hollowed out to accommodate the hand holding the handle) lasted for several decades. The Roman Army, for its part, used a metal boss (*umbo*) at the same time, but it took some time for this to be adopted by the gladiators. The *scuta* of *mirmillone*s, and the *parmae* of *provocatores*, kept their convex sides for a very long time; these began to be cut straight from the middle of the 1st century AD, perhaps at the time of the first appearance of the *secutor*, an *armatura* immediately equipped with a semi-cylindrical shield. The *myrmillonicum scutum* undoubtedly inspired the Roman Army, which in turn gave it to its legionaries. In the 4th century AD, Ammianus Marcellinus wrote (XXXIII.6) that it was the shield and the way it was handled that distinguished the *mirmillo*. On certain reliefs and mosaics, the *scutum* of the *mirmillo* and *secutor* sometimes appears rounded at the bottom, but this is only an error of perspective, because its drawing is difficult. This error is also observable on a *parma* carried by a *Thraex*, on a mosaic from Reims (France). Logically, this rounded end is never visible on statuettes. While the large and medium shields had a horizontal handle, we sometimes discover vertical handles inside the *parmae* of *Thraeces*. They could thus hit their opponent more easily.

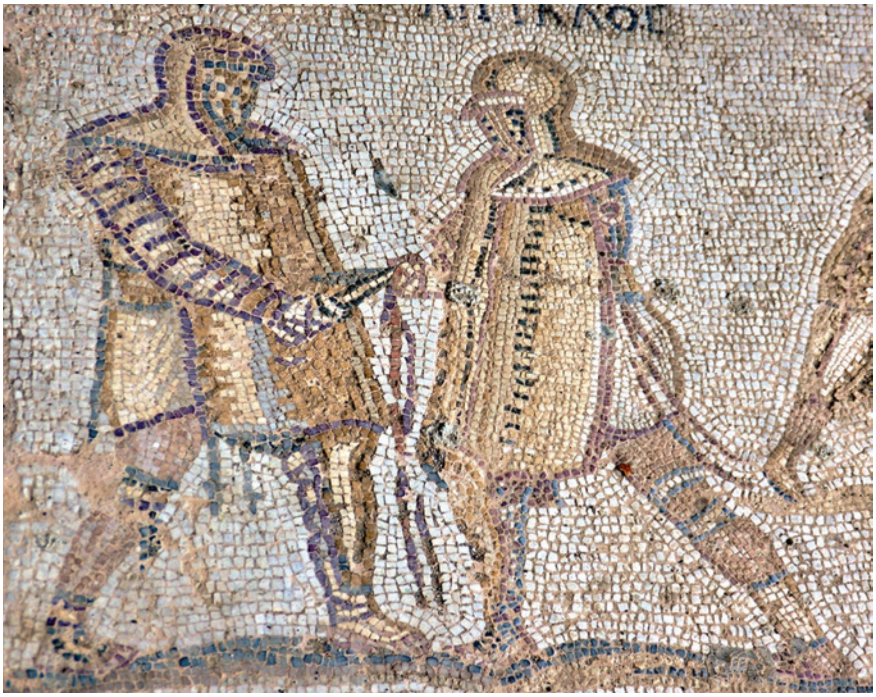
Only *equites* carried **leather shields**, of a type known as the *parma equestris*. The Zliten mosaic and the Stabian Gate relief show the interior of this shield, equipped with a central handle hidden in the protuberance, as in an *umbo*. Such shields lacked the offensive function, however, because striking with them would not cause any harm to an opponent.

Gladiators also carried **metal shields**. Discovered in the gladiator school of Pompeii, the famous round and almost flat shield, 37cm in diameter and made of silvered iron, is absolutely not a *parma* used by an *eques*, nor even the shield of a *hoplomachus*, as is very often written. Decorated with stamped laurel and oak wreaths, this stunning piece is more of an award weapon, as it does not even have a handle inside, only a central strap. With a reduced diameter of around 50cm, the *hoplomachus* shield was certainly made of metal, because its semi-spherical shape was difficult to reproduce in wood without making it too thick. The grip system is never shown in surviving depictions, but we clearly see the entire forearm enclosed inside the shield, which does not allow hitting. The *hoplomachus* had to slip his forearm through a central strap, and his hand gripped a handle fixed on the edge. In the same hand he also held a sword, which was awkward to manage.

From the 2nd or 3rd century AD, most colour representations of *scuta* show yellow coverings, often with very realistic reflections, as if they were made of shiny metal. This observation is striking in the mosaics of Madrid (p.56) and Bad Kreuznach (p.20); others could also be cited. Some also feature painted designs. We also know that there were *provocator* shields of the same

This *parma equestris* is painted on the podium wall of the amphitheatre in Pompeii. (R. D'Amato)



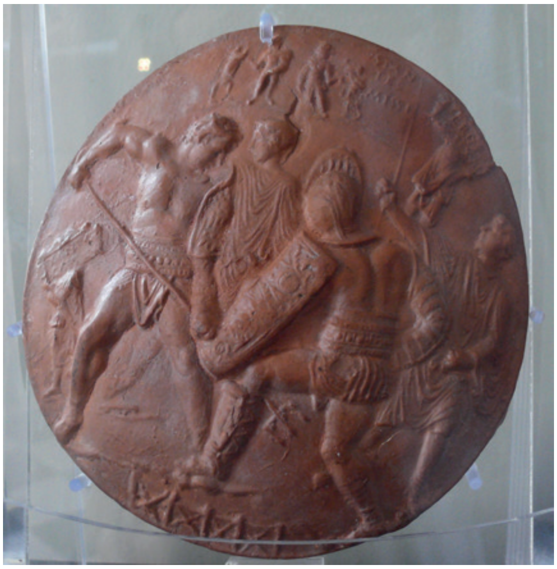


This detail from a mosaic from Kos (Greece) shows a duel between *provocatores*. Their shields are covered in brass, as are their helmets, greaves and *manicae*. (N. Montacq-Velten)

appearance. This suggests that, during this period, such shields were covered with a sheet of brass, perhaps so that they reflected the light, and so that the blows resonated better. If this hypothesis is true, their weight must have been greater than before.

The podium wall of the amphitheatre in Pompeii (see p.58) shows painted shields in the middle of the 1st century AD, offered as votive offerings by freed gladiators. The decoration is mainly composed of large scrolls, on coloured panels that divide the surface of the shield into several sectors. We also see them on the Zliten mosaic. During the Principate, geometric figures dominated; these were often very simple, sometimes amounting to a vertical diamond or a grid pattern. Complex or figurative paintings were quite rare (the Cavillargues medallion, for example). Often, the shields depicted are devoid of any decoration, and have a monochrome, generally white, appearance. Could it be that shield decorations were distinctive badges of particular gladiator schools, like the shield designs used by Roman military units? On the relief from the Collezione Torlonia (Palazzo Orsini, Rome; see Gilbert 2022: 7), in the hands of an *eques* and a *Thraex*, two shields are very similar: a head of Medusa in the middle of a laurel wreath. On the Stabian Gate relief, an *eques*, a *Thraex* and a *provocator* all have shields with similar decoration: a thick diamond framing the *spina*, with two palmettes in the interior corners, and a flower in each corner of the shield. Owing to the lack of additional evidence, we cannot corroborate this theory.

Displayed at the Musée de la Romanité (Nîmes, France), and dating from the 2nd century AD, the Cavillargues medallion represents the fight of the *retiarius* Xanthus against the *secutor* Eros, under the supervision of two arbiters. (Author's photograph)



Weapons

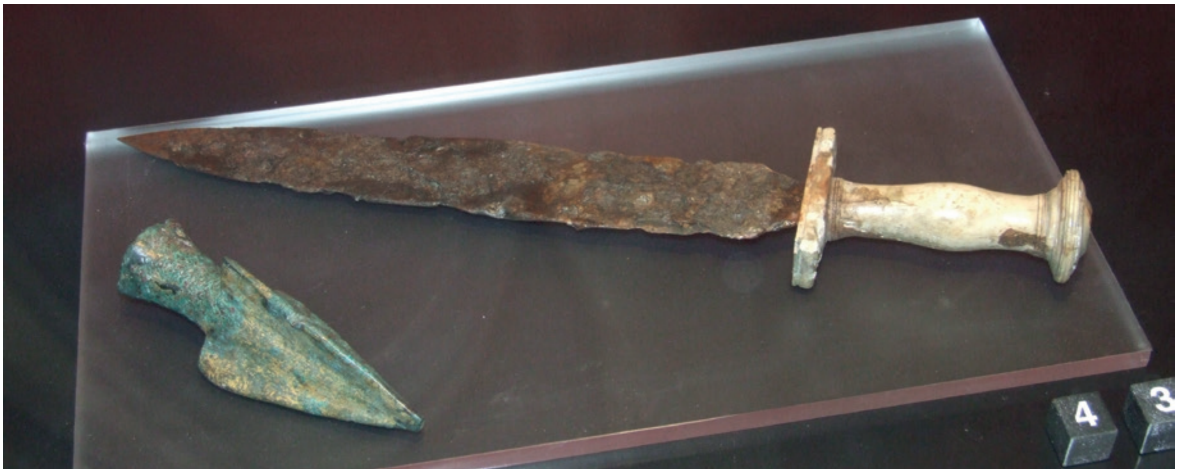
There were more or less sharp weapons distributed to gladiators, depending on the nature of the combat to be fought: combat to the death or not. Dio Cassius recalls (LXXI.29.3) that Marcus Aurelius, who had a horror of blood, only gave blunt weapons to the combatants. On the other hand, Drusus, son of the emperor Tiberius, appreciated bloody duels, and distributed very sharp weapons, which took the name 'Drusian'. Petronius also mentions the case of the *munus* offered by a certain Titus, who only allowed sharpened swords, and he had one of his characters say: 'We are therefore sure to witness magnificent carnage' (*Satir*. XLV.6).

The subject of offensive weapons is easy to address, because we do not have sufficient archaeological artefacts to draw up typologies.

Under Augustus, military **swords**, of the so-called Mainz type, ceased to be used by gladiators. When the panoplies became lighter, and the size of the shields decreased, the swords were replaced with daggers measuring approximately 30–40cm overall, in most *armaturae*, to favour close combat. Three examples were discovered in the gladiator school of Pompeii. Each has a short, sharp blade, set in a Greek-influenced ivory hilt. Elsewhere and at other times, different models were used, with thin and triangular blades, leaf-shaped, with parallel edges and an angular tip, etc. The grips were generally of the Roman type, which is to say with a thick guard and an ovoid pommel. These weapons were mainly used for thrusting, but could also lacerate flesh. On the other hand, the sword used by *essedarii* only struck with the edges, because it had no tip. In fact, it was longer than the Pompeian daggers. We see a clear representation of this on the Kourion mosaic.

The sword used by the *Thraeci* was distinctive, because its double-edged blade was curved. The Romans called it the *sica*, or *falx supina*: literally 'scythe turned upwards' (Juvenal, *Sat*. VIII.201). A wooden training *sica* was discovered in the Augustan military camp at Haltern (Germany). The end of its blade (46.5cm long) is slightly curved upwards. In the middle of the 1st century AD, this sword type became more angular, bent at approximately 45 degrees. The intended use of this weapon remained the same, however: to take advantage of the sword's angle or curvature to bypass the opponent's defences. A detail from the Zliten mosaic aptly illustrates this tactic, with a *Thraex* managing to wound the back of a *mirmillo*'s thigh. During the 3rd and 4th centuries AD, the *sica* returned to a more rounded shape, sometimes

This dagger and what appears to be a bronze spear tip were found in the gladiator barracks of Pompeii. (R. D'Amato)



exaggeratedly so. All of these swords were held in the hands of gladiators. We never see a sheath attached to a belt.

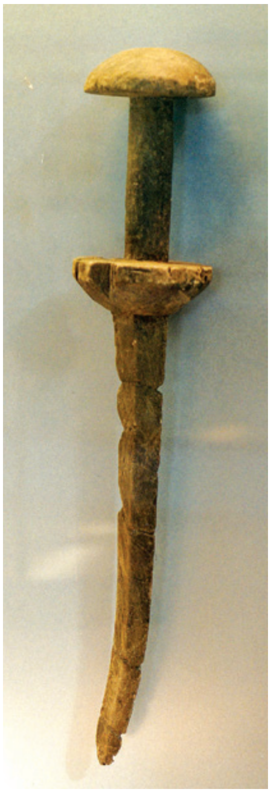
The two weapons used by the *retiarius*, the **trident** and **net**, do not appear to have undergone any major developments during the Principate. The head of the trident remained small in size, between 15cm and 25cm, with generally parallel branches. Sometimes the points were barbed, which must have been intended to tear the opponent's flesh. On a famous mosaic from Sarre (Germany), dating from the beginning of the 3rd century AD, the lower angles of the head of the trident are provided with fangs, doubtless intended either to seize the shield of the *secutor* or to strike his body.

The net is more rarely represented. According to surviving evidence, and in particular thanks to a graffito found in Ruscino (Perpignan, France), it must have had a square shape of approximately 2m^2, and meshes of approximately 10cm^2. It was probably made of hemp, but Pliny the Elder mentions (*His. Nat.* XIX.10) hunters' nets made of linen from Tarquinia in Etruria, or linen from Cumae in Campania (Italy), renowned for their strength. The net does not seem to have been used by the *retiarii* during their fights on the footbridge; it is never shown. The reason is simple: the *retiarius* was required to throw projectiles – as big as tennis balls and made of either wood, stone or metal – at his adversaries, who were trying to climb up the footbridge and onto the platform. He therefore was unable to wield any other weapons than the trident and net simultaneously.

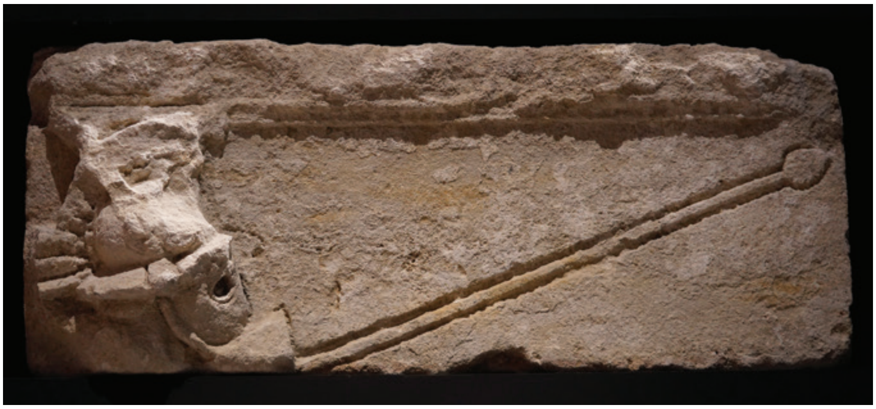
The points of **spears** or **javelins** were discovered in Pompeii, of various shapes and lengths. One is even three-sided. All are made of bronze, and it is difficult to attribute them to particular *armaturae*, because they may also have belonged to hunters.

There were other original weapons, which do not require special descriptions, such as the whip or the staff of the *paegnarii*, and the bows and arrows of the *sagittarii*.

We conclude this section by discussing the **metal sleeve** used by the *scissor/arbelas*. This armoured gladiator held a dagger in his right hand, but it is the weapon he held in his left hand that distinguished him from his contemporaries. It was a segment of metal tube, at the bottom of which a gripping system was fitted: surely a horizontal handle. At the end of this sleeve, shaped like a cone, was attached a shoemaker's cutting edge, with which the *scissor* strove to cut through the *retiarius*' net that would have imprisoned him. He could also use it to parry the *retiarius*' trident blows. This sleeve covered the entire left forearm up to the elbow, so as not to interfere with the joint.



Dated to the beginning of the 1st century AD and now held at the LWL-Römermuseum Haltern am See (Germany), this wooden training *sica* was discovered on the site of a Roman military camp. (Author's photograph)



Dating from the 1st century AD and now held at the Narbo Via Museum (Narbonne, France), this artefact shows a *hoplomachus* armed with a long spear. The short, stubby tip is similar to a bronze artefact from Pompeii. (M. Behel)

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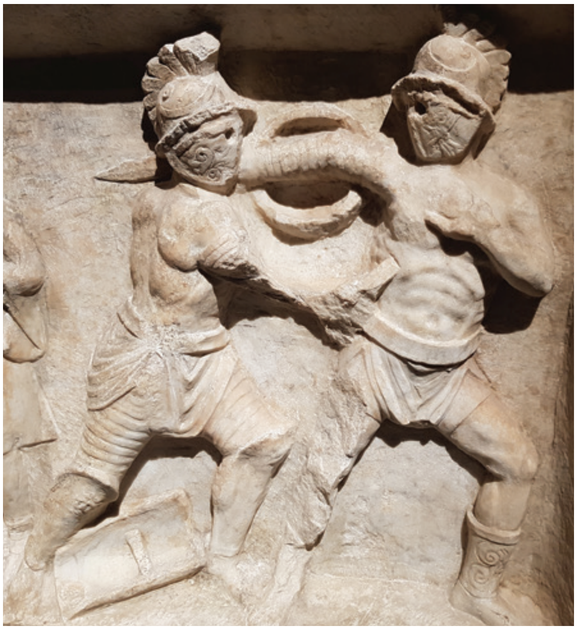

Dating from the second quarter of the 1st century AD, this bas-relief from the mausoleum of Cnaeus Clovatius (now held at the Museo archeologico nazionale di Napoli) depicts a duel between a *hoplomachus* (left) and a *mirmillo*. At this date the greaves of the *hoplomachus* did not yet cover the thighs, and the leg protection of the *mirmillo* was still a gaiter of embossed leather that covered the entire foot. (G. Habasque)

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INDEX

References to illustrations are shown in **bold.** Plates are shown with page locators in brackets.

andabata/trincus 26
animals, combat with 27, **27**, 28, 34, 39, 46
armbands/*manicae* **5**, 7, **8**, 10, **10**, **A1–4(11)**, **14**, 15, 18, **18**, 19, **19**, 20, **20**, 21, **22**, **23**, 24, **C2–5(25)**, 28, 29, **29**, 30, **30**, **D1–2(31)**, 32, 33, 36, **E1–2(37)**, **39**, 41, **41**, 42, **F2–4(43)**, 44–45, 47, 48, **G1–4(49)**, 56, **H3–4(57)**, **59**
Augustus, reforms of 4–6, 8, 10, 14, 60

belts/girdles 10, **A2–4(11)**, 16, **B1–4(17)**, 24, **C1–2, 5(25)**, 30, **D1, 3(31)**, 36, **E1(37)**, 38, 39–40, 42, **F3–5(43)**, **46**, 48, **G1, 3–4(49)**, 50
body armour 10, 15, 22, 24, 32, 33, 35, 39, **41**, 48, **G2(49)**, 56, **H4(57)**: breastplates 21, 30, **D2(31)**, 41, 56; pectorals 18, 24, **C4(25)**, 41–42, **F4(43)**, 44, **44**, 46

clothing 35, **39**, **40**
  breeches 19, 20, 39
  leggings 24, **C3(25)**, 42, **F1–4(43)**
  shorts 10, **A3(11)**, 24, **C4(25)**, 38
  tunics 10, **A1(11)**, 16, **B4(17)**, 21, 22, 24, **C1, 5(25)**, 26, 28, 30, **D4–5(31)**, 33, 36, **E3–5(37)**, 39, 41, 42, **F2(43)**, 56, **H2, 4(57)**
  underwear 18, 24, **C2–3(25)**, 42: loincloths 10, **A3–4(11)**, 16, **B1–4(17)**, 24, **C3–5(25)**, 30, **D1, 3(31)**, 36, **E1(37)**, 38–39, 40, 42, **F3–5(43)**, 48, **G1, 3–4(49)**, 56, **H5(57)**
criminals/convicts/slaves, use in combat 7, 9, 23–24, 26, 27, 46
crupellarius 34, **34**

dimachaerus: clothing/protection **33**, 39, 41, 56; combat/weapons **9**, 33, **33**, 35, 56, **H3(57)**; headgear **9**, **33**, 55, 56, **H3(57)**

eques 8, 22, 26: clothing/protection 10, **A1(11)**, 21, **21**, **22**, 26, 39, **41**, 45, 56, **H2(57)**; combat/weapons 10, **A1(11)**, 21, **21**, **22**, 26, **41**, 51, 56, **H2(57)**, 58, 59; headgear 21, **21**, **41**, 50, 51, 56, **H2(57)**
essedarius 33: clothing/protection **13**, 14, 30, **D1(31)**, 39, 42, **F5(43)**, 48, **52**; combat/weapons 13–14, **13**, 16, **B3(17)**, 30, **D1(31)** 39, 42, **F5(43)**, **52**, 60; headgear **13**, 14, 16, **B3(17)**, 30, **D1(31)**, 42, **F5(43)**, 50, **52**, 53, **54**

female gladiators 8, **16**
footwear 10, **A1(11)**, 21, 24, **C1(25)**, 30, **D4–5(31)**, 42, **F4(43)**, 56, **H2(57)**
free(d) men, use in combat 8, 9, 36, 59

Gallus 12–13, 15
gladiator schools 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13, 16, 24, 26, 27, 30, 36, 40, 41, 48, 58, 59, 60, 61

headgear
  caps 24, **C5(25)**
  helmets **4**, 5, **5**, **6**, 7, 8, **9**, **10**, **12**, **13**, 14, **14**, 15, **15**, 16, **B1, 4(17)**, 18, 19, **19**, 20, **20**, 21, **21**, 22, 23, **23**, 24, **C3–4(25)**, 26, 27–28, 29, **29**, 30, **30**, **D2(31)**, 32, **32**, 33, **33**, 34, **34**, 35, **35**, **36**, **E1, 3–5(37)**, **38**, **40**, **42**, **44**, 46, **G3(49)**, 50, **50**, 54–55, 56, **56**, **H1, 4(57)**, **59**, **61**, **62**: Attic 51; Berlin 30, **D3(31)**, 36, **E2(37)**, 42, **F3–5(43)**, 52, 53, **53**, 56; Chieti 10, **A1–4(11)**, 16, **B3(17)**, 50–51, **51**, 52, **52**, 53, 56, **H2–3(57)**; Hellenistic 50; ovoid 53, 55; Pompeii 16, 24, **C2(25)**, 36, 48, 51, 52; Tralles **8**, 48, **G2(49)**, 54, **55**; Weisenau 53
  hoods 42, **F5(43)**
hoplomachus: clothing/protection **4**, 10, **A4(11)**, 20, **20**, 24, **C2(25)**, 42, **F3(43)**, 45, 47, **47**, **62**; combat/weapons **4**, 10, **A4(11)**, 14, 18, 19, 20, **20**, 24, **C2(25)**, 42, **F3(43)**, 47, 58, **61**, **62**; headgear **4**, 10, **A4(11)**, 20, **20**, 24, **C2(25)**, 42, **F3(43)**, 50, 52, **52**, **61**, **62**

javelins/spears **4**, 10, **A1, 4(11)**, 14, 16, **B3(17)**, 20, **20**, 21, 26, 28, 35, 36, **E3–5(37)**, **42**, **60**, 61, **61**

leg protection 36, 48, **G1(49)**: ankle protectors 16, **B1, 4(17)**, 24, **C4–5(25)**, 36, **E3–5(37)**, 42, **F3(43)**; bands/padding/wrappings 19, 20, 21, 24, **C4(25)**, 48, 56, **H2(57)**; gaiters **5**, **8**, **9**, **20**, **21**, 24, **C2(25)**, **27**, 30, **D2–3(31)**, **32**, 36, **E1(37)**, 42, **F3–5(43)**, 48, 56, **56**, **H1, 4(57)**, **62**; greaves **7**, **8**, 10, **A2–4(11)**, **12**, **13**, **14**, 15, **15**, 16, **B1(17)**, 19, **19**, 20, **20**, 21, 24, **C2–4(25)**, 29, **29**, 30, **D2–3(31)**, 32, **33**, 35, 36, **36**, **E1–2(37)**, **38**, **39**, 42, **F3(43)**, **44**, 47–48, **47**, 48, **48**, 52, 56, **H1, 4(57)**, **59**, **62**; kneepads 16, **B4(17)**

mirmillo: clothing/protection **5**, **7**, **8**, 10, **10**, **A3(11)**, **12**, **14**, 15, **19**, **20**, 29, 30, **D3(31)**, 32, 38, 47, **48**, **62**; combat/weapons **5**, **7**, **8**, 10, **10**, **A3(11)**, **12**, 14–15, **14**, 18, 19, **19**, 20, **20**, 22–23, 29, 30, **D3(31)**, **40**, 47, 53, 55, 58, **58**, 60, **62**; headgear **5**, **7**, **8**, 10, **10**, **A3(11)**, **12**, **14**, 15, **19**, 20, **20**, 23, 29, 30, **D3(31)**, 48, 50, 51, 52, **52**, 53–54, **53**, 55, **62**
mirmillo tunicatus 16, **B4(17)**, **40**
musicians/instruments 30, **D4–5(31)**

orbiculi 39, 48, **G3(49)**, 56, **H4–5(57)**

paegnarius: clothing/protection 16, **B2(17)**, 27, **27**, 28, 38, 39, 42, **F1–2(43)**, 45; combat/weapons 16, **B2(17)**, 27, **27**, 28, **28**; 39, 42, **F1–2(43)**, 45, 36, 61; headgear 27–28
provocator 15–16: clothing/protection **5**, **15**, 18, **18**, 24, **C4(25)**, 38, **38**, 40, 41, 42, **F4(43)**, **44**, 46, 47, 53, **59**; combat/weapons **5**, **6**, 14, **15**, **16**, 18, **18**, 24, **C4(25)**, 38, **38**, 42, **F4(43)**, **44**, 47, 50, 51, 58–59, **59**; headgear **5**, **13**, **15**, 18, **18**, 24, **C4(25)**, **38**, 42, **F4(43)**, **44**, 50, **50**, 51, **51**, **54**, 55, **59**

referees 5, 7, **10**, **21**, 24, **C1(25)**, **42**, **56**
retiarius 30: clothing/protection 7, 22, **22**, **23**, 24, **C5(25)**, 28, 35, 36, **36**, 38, 39, **39**, **41**, 42, **42**, **44**, 45–46, **45**, **46**, 47, 48, **G1, 4(49)**; combat/weapons 7, 9, 13, 14, 15, 22–23, **22**, 23–24, **23**, **C5(25)**, 29–30, **30**, 32–33, **36**, **39**, **42**, **44**, 46, 48, **G1, 4(49)**, 53–54, 55, **56**, **59**, 61; headgear 24, **C5(25)**, **44**, 46
retiarius tunicatus 8–9, 24, **C5(25)**
rudiarius 36, 56, **H5(57)**
rudis (wand) 24, **C1(25)**, 38, 56, **H5(57)**

sagittarius 24, 26, 61
Samnis 10, 12–13, 39, 40
scissor/arbelas: clothing/protection 30, **D2(31)**, 32, **32**, 33, **36**, 39, 41, **41**, 48, 56, **H4(57)**; combat/weapons **9**, 30, **D2(31)**, 32–33, **32**, **36**, 54, 55, 56, **H4(57)**, 61; headgear 30, **D2(31)**, 32, **32**, 33, **36**, 54, 56, **H4(57)**
secutor 29: clothing/protection **8**, 16, **B1(17)**, 29, **29**, **30**, 32, 36, **E1(37)**, 39, 40, 42, **42**, 45, 47, 48, **48**, **G2–3(49)**, **56**; combat/weapons **8**, 9, 15, 16, **B1(17)**, **23**, 24, 29–30, **29**, **30**, 36, **E1(37)**, **42**, 47, 48, **G2–3(49)**, 53–54, **54**, 55, **55**, **56**, 58, **58**, **59**, 61; headgear **8**, 15, 16, **B1(17)**, **23**, 29, **29**, 30, **30**, **D2(31)**, 32, 36, **E1(37)**, **42**, 48, **G2–3(49)**, 53–54, **53**, **54**, 55, **55**, **56**, 58
shields 18, 32, 36, 41, 45, 47, 48, 56, 58–59, 60, 61: convex 16, **B1, 4(17)**, 24, **C4(25)**, 42, **F5(43)**, **59**; oval **13**, 14, 16, **B3(17)**, **21**, 26, 30, **D1(31)**, 36, **E3–5(37)**, 42, **F5(43)**, **52**; rectangular **5**, **8**, 10, **A2(11)**, 14–15, **14**, **15**, **18**, **19**, **20**, **23**, 29, **29**, 30, **D3(31)**, 36, **E1–2(37)**, **38**, 42, **42**, **F4(43)**, 48, **G2–3(49)**, **56**, **58**, **59**, **62**; round **4**, 8, 10, **A1, 4(11)**, 16, 18, 20, 21, **21**, **22**, **35**, **41**, 51, 56, **H2(57)**, 58, **58**, **59**; semi-spherical 24, **C2(25)**, 42, **F3(43)**, 58; square **4**, **6**, 7, 10, **A2(11)**, **16**, **18**, 19, 24, **C3(25)**, 56, **H1(57)**
shoulder protection 9, 16, **B2(17)**, **20**, 22, 24, **C2, 5(25)**, 30, **D1(31)**, 35, 36, **E1(37)**, **39**, 41, 42, **F2–3, 5(43)**, 44, 45–46, **45**, **46**, 47, 48, **G1, 4(49)**, 56; **H1, 3(57)**
sticks/whips 16, **B2(17)**, 27, **27**, 28, 38, 39, 45, 46, 61
swords/daggers **4**, **6**, 7, 8, **8**, 10, **A2–3(11)**, 14, **14**, 15, 16, **B1, 3–4(17)**, 18, 19, **19**, 20, **20**, 21, 23, 24, **C2–4(25)**, 26, 29, **29**, 30, **D1–3(31)**, 33, **33**, 35, 36, **E1–2(37)**, **39**, 41, 42, **F3–5(43)**, 47, 48, **G1, 3–4(49)**, 50, 56, **56**, **H1–4(57)**, 58, 60–61, **60**, **61**, **62**

Thraex 23: clothing/protection **4**, 7, **9**, 10, **10**, **A2(11)**, **12**, **14**, 19, **19**, 24, **C3(25)**, 33, 36, **E2(37)**, 39, **40**, 46, 47, **47**, 56, **H1(57)**; combat/weapons **4**, **6**, 7, 8, 9, **9**, 10, **10**, **A2(11)**, **12**, 14, **14**, 18, 19, **19**, 20, 24, **C3(25)**, 33, 36, **E2(37)**, **40**, 47, 55, 56, **H1(57)**, 58, 59, 60; headgear **4**, **6**, 7, **9**, 10, **10**, **A2(11)**, **12**, **14**, 19, **19**, 24, **C3(25)**, 36, **E2(37)**, **40**, 50, 51, **51**, 52, 55, 56, **H1(57)**
tridents/nets 7, 9, 22, **22**, 23, **23**, 24, **C5(25)**, 29, **30**, 32, 33, **36**, **39**, **44**, 46, 48, **G1(49)**, 54, 55, 61
tunicatus 8, 9, 16, **B4(17)**, 22, 24, **C5(25)**, 39, 40

veles: clothing/protection 26, 36, **E3–5(37)**, 39; combat/weapons 26, 36, **E3–5(37)**,

OSPREY PUBLISHING
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
Kemp House, Chawley Park, Cumnor Hill, Oxford OX2 9PH, UK
29 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, Ireland
1385 Broadway, 5th Floor, New York, NY 10018, USA
E-mail: info@ospreypublishing.com
www.ospreypublishing.com

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First published in Great Britain in 2024
This electronic edition published in 2024 by Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

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A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: PB 9781472862761; eBook 9781472862785;
ePDF 9781472862778; XML 9781472862792

Index by Rob Munro
Typeset by PDQ Digital Media Solutions, Bungay, UK

Osprey Publishing supports the Woodland Trust, the UK's leading woodland conservation charity.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Nick Reynolds and Martin Windrow, for having judged that my work on Roman gladiators is of interest to Osprey Publishing.
I would like to thank again my friend Raffaele d'Amato, a great specialist in all things, but of course in Antiquity. Many of the photos in this book come from his fantastic photo library. Other images were provided to me by my friends who travel to museums in Europe and elsewhere: M'hammed Behel, Vladimir Bolshakov, Jean-Michel Buscail, Gilles Habasque, Olaf Kuippers, Stephane Lagrange, Noémie Ledouble, Noëlle Montacq-Velten and Christophe Vaginay-Darnetz. Thanks also to Alfonso Manas for proofreading the text.

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Title-page illustration: A detail of the decoration of a Pompeii helmet held at the Museo archeologico nazionale di Napoli and bearing elements of imperial propaganda. (R. D'Amato)